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WILMER COLLECTION

TOBIAS WILSON

A TALE

OF THE

GREAT REBELLION.

BY

HON. JERE. CLEMENS.

FIRST SERIES.

PHILADELPHIA:
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.
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To My Wife.

It is now, my dear Mary, more than a quarter of a century since we began the journey of life together. Both were infants in law, and children in reality; but the love and faith which were plighted then, with mingled smiles and tears, have never been blighted by adversity, or corrupted by prosperity. In joy and in grief, amid petty trials and in great afflictions, you have been a comfort and a support to me—robbing sorrow of its sting—relieving sickness of its weariness and pain, and ever pointing, from the gloom of night, to the brightness of the coming morn. What the future may bring forth, we cannot foreknow; for life is a Pandora's box from which strange and fearful things are forever winging their flight to homes and to hearts that are apparently the most secure. But the *past* is ours; and in the memory of that *past* I have thought it appropriate to write your name on this page of a work which records a love as pure and trustful as ever glowed in the bosom of a daughter of Earth, although its opening life was the fruit of troubled times, and blood and tears were witnesses to its maturity.

JERE. CLEMENS.

West Philadelphia, *January*, 1865.

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PREFACE.

When the last work of the author was given to the public, he promised that it should be followed by a sequel. But in a few months the fires of civil war were kindled in the land. The mad ambition of a few unprincipled leaders, aided by the insane fears of the Southern slaveholders, brought about a rebellion which has no parallel in history, whether we regard the insignificance of the causes which led to it; the madness of engaging in it for such causes, or for any cause short of intolerable oppression; the immensity of the means and resources which have been developed on both sides; the grandeur and obstinacy of the struggle; the heroism manifested in a bad cause on one side, or the steady and dauntless courage, unflinching nerve, and unwavering resolution to maintain the right on the other.

Located, as the author was, for more than three years in the very heart of this Titanic contest,

steady devotion to literary labor was an impossibility. A few memorandums were made, a few notes taken, a few pages were written from time to time as opportunity offered; but, day by day, the subject diminished in interest as events of a more exciting character thronged the arena. After his removal from the theater of war to the quietude of this city, the work was resumed, but finally laid aside as better adapted to publication in more peaceful times.

The characters of this story are real, though, of course, the names and locations are changed, so as not to wound the sensibility of the survivors, their friends, or relatives. Nothing is depicted here which did not occur as related, or which has not a parallel in some other actual occurrence.

I remember that in a kindly criticism of a former work, written by a gentleman who is now a general officer in the army of the United States, certain passages were commented on as too extravagant for even the privileges of fiction. *It so happened that those very passages were literal transcripts from real life.* He was young then, and I venture to assert, that if he were to write that criticism over again, in the light of his experience as an officer, it would be a very different affair.

In what I have now written, and in what I shall

write hereafter, for this book is only the first of a series, my object is to give a true and faithful picture of life during the first years of the rebellion, at least in parts of the Southern States. *Omnia vidi magna pars fui*, if not literally true as to every incident, is true as to the greater part.

It is impossible for any one who has not witnessed them to appreciate the wrongs, indignities, and outrages to which the Southern Union men have been subjected. Their property taken or destroyed, their persons constantly threatened with incarceration, if not assassination, and their sons dragged to the slaughter-pen; these were common occurrences, whose frequent recurrence deprived them of half their horror. The sending of our wives into exile, without the means of subsistence, and dependent for bread upon the charity of the people of the North, or of such chance refugees who had escaped under happier auspices,—this, too, in time ceased to be a subject of complaint. But there were a thousand acts of brutality which cannot be described without giving offense to the ears of decency. From a faithful picture of such things the eyes of a modest woman would turn away with unutterable loathing. From the present series all of these are omitted, and only such matter is introduced as may be read without

a blush, unless it be a blush of indignation rather than of shame.

One word more. In this volume, everything has been sacrificed to the painting of a correct portrait. If my readers look for other adjuncts to keep alive their interest in the tale, they will be apt to reap disappointment.

THE AUTHOR.

PHILADELPHIA, Jan. 9, 1865.

TOBIAS WILSON.

CHAPTER I.

In the wild and mountainous region of North Alabama, near the sources of Paint Rock River, there lived, in the year 1860, an old man with a widowed daughter and her only son. Time had dealt kindly with Robert Johnson, for although he had passed his sixty-fifth year, he was yet strong and healthy, his bearing was erect, his step firm, and his gray eyes clear and bright. His daughter, Mrs. Wilson, had inherited the strong constitution of her father, and now, in the thirty-eighth year of her age, her symmetrical but rather too masculine form betrayed no symptom of decay. Her face had never been beautiful, but there was about it an expression of quick intelligence and of frank good humor, which harmonized well with her comely figure, and made her altogether a very pleasant person to look upon. The boy, who was about eighteen years of age, bore little resemblance to his mother or grandfather. He was light and slender, so much so that he appeared at least two years younger than he really was. His originally chestnut-colored hair, from constant exposure to sun and wind had changed to a dingy brown, and his features were irregular and sallow, but they were lit up by dark hazel eyes as piercing and brilliant as those of the hawk on his native mountains.

Mr. Johnson had no neighbors properly so called. The valley in which his humble cabin stood was one of the most secluded in that wild and thinly settled region. If the reader will give me his (or her) attention while I describe it, the tale which I am about to relate will be better understood.

It is a little low spot, of not more than a hundred acres, shut in completely on three sides by high and precipitous mountains,—among the loftiest and most rugged of the Cumberland Mountain range. At the northeastern extremity, near the base of the mountain, there is an unexplored cave, from the mouth of which flows a stream of icy coldness. This stream runs along the eastern base of the mountain, and finally makes its way out through a narrow opening, of not more than twenty yards in width, at the south side of the valley. The only road by which the valley can be entered by anything on wheels, is the gravelly bed of the stream. In the dry season it is nothing more than a tiny rill. But in winter and the early spring the volumes of water which rush down from the sides of the mountain convert it into a deep and dangerous torrent. On the narrow strip of land between this stream and the mountain side, and within a few yards of the cave from which the streamlet flows, stand, or rather stood, the cabin of Robert Johnson. The dwelling was a double cabin, built of unhewn logs, with a passage between. One room of the cabin served Mrs. Wilson as kitchen, dining-room, and bed-room. The other room was occupied by the old man and his grandson, and such rare visitors as sometimes found their way to this secluded dell.

It was early in October, in the year 1860, and on the day our story begins, there was a political meeting in a large valley over the mountain, about five miles from Johnson's house. There were speakers representing respect-

ively the parties of Bell, Douglas, and Breckenridge. At the close of the meeting, Mr. Johnson cordially invited me to spend the night at his house, and, as by crossing the mountain at that point I could save nearly twenty miles of my next day's journey, I gladly accepted his invitation. A bridle path was the only road leading over the mountain, and I knew it to be steep and rugged in the extreme; but I had been accustomed to scrambling over such paths from my childhood, and felt sure that I should be more than compensated for the fatigue by the glorious scenery through which it led.

There are few things in nature to equal the mingled beauty and sublimity with which the Cumberland Mountains are wrapped when autumn throws its many-colored robe about their giant forms. In other lands, and in our own, I have seen loftier mountain peaks and reveled in the contemplation of landscapes as lovely and as sweet; but in the one case it was grandeur alone, and beauty in the other. Nowhere else is there such a mingling together of all that is soft and beautiful with all that is grand and sublime. The day was clear and bright, and not a cloud darkened the blue heaven above us. The sun was still above the western tree tops, and poured a flood of golden radiance upon the mighty wall which rose before us with its rugged sides adorned and almost hidden by living garlands of green and purple and gold, scattered there in magnificent profusion by the prodigal hand of nature. In that land the mountains are almost invariably covered with a thick growth of trees and bushes, embracing every variety of the productions of the soil, and the effect produced by the first frosts of autumn is indescribably beautiful. Upon one tree the leaves have assumed a deep purple tint, another has changed to a bright yellow, another has clothed itself in sober russet; upon yet another, the foli-

age at a little distance presents the appearance of having been freshly painted white, and thickly scattered among these the evergreen, pine, and cedar spread out their branches, with seemingly conscious pride, to challenge the admiration of the beholder for the brighter green which the cool days of autumn have brought to take the place of the dull verdure they had worn under the scorching sun of summer.

As we approached the mountain, the path gradually became so narrow that it was necessary to ride in single file, an interruption to our conversation which I hailed with joy, since it left me in undisturbed liberty to feast my senses upon that glorious panorama. It was a scene upon which a great poet or a great painter might have gazed forever, not only with undiminished, but increasing rapture.

We had ascended a little more than half way when we reached a bench of the mountain, upon which my companion halted to breathe his horse. When I reined up by his side, his first remark satisfied me that he had been drinking in the rapturous delight I had fancied was all my own.

"It is not often, Mr. ——," he said, pointing to the valley below us, "it is not often that such a picture can be found in the galleries of the greatest masters!"

"Not often!" I exclaimed; "say rather NEVER. No human hand can paint, no human tongue can justly describe it!"

He looked at me for a moment in some surprise, I thought, at the enthusiasm of my words and manner.

"I thought," he said, in the tone of one asking a question, "that you were a native of these mountains."

"So I am. I am too proud of my birth-place to conceal or deny it."

"Then you must be familiar with sights like this, and yet

you speak of it with as much enthusiasm as if you had discovered a great treasure, or drank for the first time from the cup of a new joy."

"I have been, indeed, familiar with such sights from a period which dates further back than memory will serve me. I even think that I know some points in this range of mountains from which the view is more striking than this; but it *is* a new joy, as you term it, nevertheless, for it is one with which the soul can never be sated."

"I think you are right," he replied. "When I came to this country, some ten years ago, and enjoyed for the first time the wild beauty of its mountain scenery, I thought that after awhile it would become so familiar as to be indifferent to me; but years have passed, and the sensations it creates are still the same."

"But," he continued, "we must be jogging on. We have barely time to reach my cabin by sundown, and it is far more pleasant to gaze upon these mountains by daylight than to wander among them after nightfall."

This was an assertion which my experience did not allow me to contradict. Some such idea seemed also to have taken possession of our horses, for when their heads were again turned up the steep ascent, they moved forward of their own accord at such an increased rate of speed as gave unmistakable proof that shelter and food would be as agreeable to them as to their riders. Much of the beauty of the scenery still lingered about us, but the words of my companion had afforded me other themes for thought. I could not doubt that he was an educated and cultivated man, and that he had been reared in a different society from that about him.

Was he one of that not uncommon class who, having "seen better times," wither away at the first breath of misfortune, and become ever afterward alike useless to them-

selves and to society? No; he was clearly not a man to give way to despair. There was in his tone and manner no symptom of discontent. His whole bearing was free, easy, independent, without a trace of that weak and unmanly spirit which goes about begging for even the sympathy of strangers. I had been told that he was a farmer in humble circumstances, how humble I did not know, but it was apparent that his situation was one over which he shed no tears himself, and for which he asked the sympathy of no one else.

When we arrived at the summit of the mountain, the shadows had already deepened in the valley below us. The sun was still shining, but its beams were completely shut out from the little glen by the lofty mountains which everywhere hedged it in. The domestic fowls had long since sought their roosting places, and, as we descended, we were greeted by that peculiar twittering of birds and insects which gives notice that they have settled themselves for a night's repose. A little lower we perceived the glimmering of a light through the window of the cabin, and heard the barking of dogs, not exactly in anger, but rather in doubt. It was a notice to the inmates that some one was approaching, but whether friend or foe, these canine sentinels had not yet decided. Before we reached the gate, however, they came bounding over the slight impediment of a rail fence which surrounded the premises, whining and leaping upon their master's horse in the exuberance of their joy. Soon afterward, the boy who has been described in the preceding pages emerged from the cabin, bearing an iron lamp to light his grandfather to the house.

"Here, Tobias," said the old man, "take our horses, and when I have shown this gentleman in I will join you in the stable."

I demurred to this arrangement at once,—insisting on

taking care of my own horse. It was so settled at last, and all three proceeded to the stable. After the horses had been well fed and rubbed down, we passed on to the cabin. Here we found Mrs. Wilson busily engaged in preparing the supper. She suspended her occupation for a minute or so when I was introduced by her father, but almost immediately resumed her household duties. A large fire of logs was burning on the ample hearth of the adjoining room, and much to my satisfaction I was soon seated before it, enjoying to the full the animal comfort it imparted. Here the idea that my entertainer had been accustomed to more polished society than was to be found in these mountains again occurred to me. I would not be guilty of the rudeness of putting direct questions upon the subject, but I did not hesitate so to direct the conversation as to bring it out, if he was disposed to be at all communicative. I cannot tell whether or not he suspected my object, but, at all events, he said nothing to gratify my curiosity, and I sat down to the supper-table not a whit wiser than before. As usual in that country, the evening meal was a bounteous one, consisting of ham, eggs, venison, butter, biscuits, corn cakes, coffee, and milk. My mountain ride and the keen air of an October evening had given me a voracious appetite, and I feasted to excess upon the solid food before me. Mrs. Wilson retired early after supper, but the old gentleman and myself talked long and earnestly of the threatening aspect of the times.

"We are passing through a fearful ordeal," he said, "and I am not ashamed to confess that I am alarmed beyond measure. You heard those men who were shouting for Breckenridge to-day. They are honest and well-meaning citizens, but their minds have been poisoned by the devilish arts of those who have crept into their confidence by preaching democracy, and they are now being blindly

led on to the commission of a terrible crime, which must be followed by an equally terrible retribution."

"I admit," I replied, "that there is great danger; but let us work to avert it, and still hope."

"*Work!* certainly!" he exclaimed; "but hope is not altogether a creature of the will. I have tried to hope, and cannot. I suppose that other men's neighbors are in all essential particulars like mine, and that they are equally liable to be operated upon by like passions and like motives. Tell a Breckenridge Democrat that there is danger to the Union from him and his leading supporters, and he will believe in his heart, if he does not tell you to your face, that you are trying to cheat him out of his vote by practicing a Whig trick upon him. To the minds of such men there is no avenue for the entrance of unprejudiced reason. They must taste the bitter fruit before they will believe that it exists.

"I assume that the great body of the democracy in the Southern States are like these, and as they constitute a large majority, we may look for the worst. They are not prepared now to take the irrevocable step. If it was proposed to them they would shrink back with horror; but they will be led on by their wily leaders from one act to another, they will so fetter themselves by the adoption of threatening resolutions, and so commit themselves to resistance upon the happening of this or that contingency, that at last it will be easy to persuade them they cannot retrace their steps with honor, and that the only hope of a peaceful settlement is to be found in presenting an united and determined front."

"Well," I asked, "may not good come from that union? May it not lead to an understanding which will effectually secure us against dangerous quarrels in the future? Is it not better that the South should present an united front in

whatever course it takes, at least until the sword is drawn and the dark stain of a brother's blood discolors the soil, and cries out to heaven for vengeance on the wrong-doer?"

"Undoubtedly," he said, "if our leaders were honest, and there was really any wrong to be redressed, the unanimity of the demand would increase the chances of a peaceful settlement; but what wrong has the Government of the United States ever done to us? What is there to be settled? Individuals and communities throughout the North have spoken and acted in a manner hostile to slavery. Be it so. The *Government* is not responsible for that. It has discharged its whole duty and more than its duty in this respect. There has never been a time when our peculiar institution was hedged round with so many defenses as it now is; and yet we are on the verge of a revolution, whose results no human wisdom can foresee, from no other cause than a vague and undefined fear that slavery may be destroyed by the Government which is, and has been, its only protector. But these are matters I need not discuss with you. I know that you are as fully alive to the danger as I am, and far better informed as to its causes. I supposed that you wished to hear the opinions of a *clod-hopper* like myself, and I have therefore expressed them freely."

I assured him that I had been alike interested and instructed by his remarks, and I entered a decided protest against the application of the word "clod-hopper" to such a man.

"I did not need," I continued, walking up to some rough boards, in a corner, on which his books were arranged, "I did not need this tell-tale witness to convince me that you had been accustomed to very different society from that which is to be found among these mountains."

"You are right in your conjecture," he replied. "I

was once better off, in the world's view, than I am now; but as my story has nothing in it which is romantic, criminal, mysterious, or unaccountably unfortunate, I will not bore you with it. There is your bed, sir. You must be content to share this chamber with my grandson and myself."

I went to bed, but not to sleep. My thoughts were for a long time occupied with questions and conjectures concerning my host. How came that educated and polished gentleman in the garb of a common laborer? What was that clear and strong intellect doing in this seclusion? Why did he not go out into the world and battle with his kind for those posts of honor which he was so well calculated to adorn? His daughter, too, though strong and healthy, could never have been mistaken for anything but a lady, and the household drudgery which she now went through with so much ease and grace, must have been in former years a deep mystery to her. But notwithstanding the great change which it was clear had come over them, the most acute physiognomist would have failed to detect a single line of discontent upon the face of either the father or the daughter. I tried in vain to find some probable solution of the enigma. First one, and then another was called up, examined, and dismissed. In the mean time the effects of the heavy supper I had eaten, and the warm fire still burning on the hearthstone, began to be felt. I knew that my faculties were clouded, that I did not have the full use of my reason, but still I was awake, or thought I was. After awhile I saw a large dog push open the unlatched door, and coil himself down before the fire, then another, and then the fire seemed to grow dull and indistinct, and all the various objects in the room became mingled and jumbled together. There was a strong impression upon my mind that I was not sleeping, only a little drowsy. How long I remained in this state I do not know.

Suddenly, as it seemed, the drowsiness passed away. It was summer. I was standing upon a mountain side whose summit the rising sun had just begun to gild. There was a lovely valley below me, through which a little stream flowed gently toward the South. A cluster of log cabins on one side were the only signs of human habitation. Stacks of oats and wheat were standing in the field from which they had been cut, and a little farther off there was a field of Indian-corn, which extended around a spur of the mountain that jutted into the valley, so that the upper part was invisible from the place where I stood. Then an old man, followed by a boy with a rifle on his shoulder, came out of the principal cabin and proceeded to the stable, from which they soon emerged, the old man leading a horse geared for plowing. The boy let down the bars, and, putting them up again when his companion had passed through, shouldered his rifle and turned up the mountain, where he was soon lost to view among the thick undergrowth which covered its sides. I watched the old man in his progress to the field until he had turned the spur of the mountain, and was also lost to sight. For some time after his disappearance I remember nothing. Then, by one of those changes common in dreams, I was transferred to the opposite side of the valley. It was near noon. I could now see that part of the corn field which had been concealed by the spur of the mountain, and the old man I had noticed in the morning was busily plowing in the luxuriant corn which almost concealed both his horse and himself. Not far off, to the right and behind him, three men were stealthily creeping through the bushes. They were armed with rifles and knives. Entering the corn-field, they followed rapidly along the furrow the old man was plowing, until near the end of the row, when two of them, dropping their rifles, sprang suddenly upon him and pinioned his

arms behind him. His face was now, for the first time, turned toward me, and I recognized the features of my host. The next step was to bind a yellow bandana handkerchief over his eyes. This made a stronger impression upon me, because it was an article of great rarity in that country, and because I did not remember to have seen it used for years by any but members of the Pedo-Baptist Church. He was then hurried up a narrow gorge, cut, for the most part, out of the earth by torrents created by the winter's rain. Within thirty yards of his own corn field they halted, two of them stepped back six or seven paces, raised their rifles and fired. One or both balls must have touched the heart, for he fell with that peculiar doubling up of the limbs, that absence of catching for support, which, to a practiced eye, is an unerring indication that life is utterly extinct. At this horrible sight I uttered a fearful cry and sprang upright in my bed. My host and his grandson were both upon their feet in a moment, eagerly inquiring what was the matter. For awhile I was so confused and bewildered that I could give no explanation, but at length I made them understand that it was nothing more than a bad dream, produced, no doubt, by the inordinate supper I had eaten. Again we addressed ourselves to sleep, and again that horrid dream, without material variation, haunted my pillow. This time, however, I did not awaken my room-mates, but rising, and drawing a rough arm-chair close to the fire, prepared to pass the night in a sitting posture. I must have slept soundly, for when I awoke it was long after daylight, and Mr. Johnson was more than half dressed. The boy was not in the room; he had gone to look after the horses, and I heard Mrs. Wilson making preparations for breakfast in the adjoining room. In that primitive land no time is wasted upon the toilet. Ours was soon concluded, and, at the suggestion

of Mr. Johnson, we stepped out to breathe the fresh and bracing air of an October morning. The first glance at that lovely vale, and its magnificent mountain inclosures, made every drop of blood in my veins run icy cold. *It was the valley of my dream.*

The reader will remember that the shadows of night shrouded the place when I descended from the mountain on the previous evening. I could not catch even an outline of the landscape, and although I had often traveled in that neighborhood, it so happened that I had never seen this secluded spot. I had looked upon it for the first time in a dream. Yet there it was, clear, vivid, distinct. All its marked characteristics were burned in on my memory as if with a brand of red-hot iron. There was the stream, the spur of the mountain, the little nook hidden from view where we now stood, and when I looked up I again saw the very ledge of rock on which I was standing when the old man came forth to his daily labor. I shuddered, and perceiving that I was observed, muttered something about the coolness of the morning, and returned to the house.

CHAPTER II.

Neither at the breakfast table, nor before, was any allusion made to the emotion which I was sure had not passed unobserved. I could not help feeling that it must have appeared very singular to my host,—but how could it be explained? Silence was the only course to be pursued. It was far better to submit to the suspicion of some extraordinary weakness than run the risk of wounding the feelings or darkening the anticipations of my kind entertainer. But, under the circumstances, conversation was necessarily restrained, and almost immediately after the meal was concluded I expressed a desire to resume my journey. Mr. Johnson interposed no objection, only remarking, with winning politeness, "I know your engagements, and suppose you must go; but it is hard for one situated as I am to be so soon deprived of the most agreeable society he has enjoyed for years."

I expressed my sense of the compliment he had paid me, and very soon afterward I bade adieu to Mrs. Wilson and her son, Mr. Johnson having agreed to pilot me through the narrow opening in the mountains, and over the rough country immediately beyond, to the public road. At that point we parted with mutual expressions of good-will and hopes of meeting again before long.

For hours I could not drive that dream from my thoughts. How could that valley have been so faithfully and distinctly painted in sleep when I had never seen it, never heard of it,—was in fact totally ignorant of its existence? In vain I pondered upon this unaccountable phenomenon. Once

the idea crossed my mind that although I could not remember to have visited that place before, I must have done so and forgotten it, and that memory had at last recalled it in a dream; but the place was too peculiar, too remarkable, and my own organ of locality, as the phrenologists term it, was too well developed to admit of this solution. I ran over in my mind all the stories I had ever heard or read of strange and unaccountable visions, and for most of them I could find some *possible* explanation; but here there was none, and I determined that the best thing to be done was to dismiss it from my thoughts. It was easier, however, to resolve upon this than to perform it. Do what I would, it would come back at the most unexpected times, for weeks and even for months. At length I related it to a friend. He laughed at me, as I expected he would, but could give no reason for his avowed belief that it was nothing more than a common nightmare. Those were times, however, in which real events were beginning to crowd upon us, more strange and fearful than any of the creations of fancy, and the memory of my dream was gradually fading away. The tide of war had rolled southward. Gen. A. S. Johnston had been driven from Bowling Green, through Nashville, Huntsville, and Tuscumbia, to Corinth, the junction of the Mobile and Ohio with that of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. At Corinth he sustained a defeat and lost his life. With considerable skill and ability, Beauregard had withdrawn his army, no one knew exactly where.

It was at this period of time that I again met Mr. Johnson and his grandson. Referring to our conversation when I was his guest in the fall of 1860, he said: "You see, sir, I was something of a prophet."

"Not much," I replied. "The probable consequences of the mad career that some of our friends and neighbors

were then running were too palpable to require a prophet's ken to foretell them."

"True," he answered. "And yet many who are wiser than I am, and much more in the habit of mingling with the world, were deceived. Worse even than that, they will not profit by the lesson, which is now before them, full of humiliation and of anguish as it is. They will persist in believing that the efforts of the Government to re-establish its rightful supremacy over its own subjects are nothing more nor less than a brutal exercise of power and a wicked invasion of *their* territory, for the purpose of reducing them to the condition of vassals or serfs."

"I know it," was my response. "I know it. And I know too how difficult it will be at such a time to obtain a hearing for the voice of reason. Still it must be attempted, unless we are content to remain idle and inactive, while those who love us, and whom we love, are rushing madly to destruction."

"The effort must indeed be made," he said mournfully; "but I have dark forebodings of the result. I do not deceive myself as to the danger. It may be a prison, a scaffold, or murder without the forms of trial. To all of these, be assured that every Union man is liable wherever the Confederate Government has power, or a secession population predominates. I may escape. I may find in obscurity an immunity which those who are better known can hardly hope for. But danger threatens us all."

I told him that his apprehensions, though certainly not groundless, were nevertheless unduly excited; that the Anglo-Saxon was not a blood-thirsty animal, and took no delight in taking away the life of an unresisting enemy. France

"Got drunk with crime to vomit blood;"

but we were of a different race, and I thought that those

who remained peacefully at home need fear no personal violence.

"Remain peacefully at home! Will they let us? Will they allow us to enjoy our own opinions? Will they let us express those opinions by our firesides, or the firesides of our neighbors? If they do leave the old and the infirm at home, will they not drag away the children upon whom we lean for support? Will they not rob us, and then say that we ought not to complain because they are fighting for our rights—our rights in the Territories, and our rights in slave property,—rights which we do not believe are in any danger, and for which, perhaps, we would not be willing to dissolve the Union if they were? Will they not do this, and more than this; and if we raise a voice in remonstrance, proclaim us as traitors, and turn loose the offscourings of their camps to prey upon or murder us at will?"

To these rapid and energetic questions I could find no answer satisfactory to my own mind, and contented myself with replying, "I hope not!"

"Hope not! So would I if I could, but I can find nothing upon which to hang a hope!"

"At all events," I said, "we can avoid much that might be both disagreeable and dangerous by prudence and moderation. We must not parade our opinions in places where we know they will be offensive, or engage in acts of opposition which will only endanger us without promoting the cause of the Union, or smoothing the pathway to peace. We can wait until a time comes when *action* promises to be useful. Through the bloody vista before us I think I can see the dawn of a new day. The old Union will never be restored, but a better union will spring from its ashes. War, like fire, is a terrible agent, but it purifies as well as destroys, and not unfrequently burns out from the body

politic the putrefying sores and loathsome cancers which are eating its life away. As much as we loved and gloried in the old Union, it is impossible to deny that some of these things were beginning to make their appearance upon it, and it may be that this war has been sent in mercy, not in anger. It may be that it will so effectually remove all cause of disagreement in the future between the two sections, that the sights and sounds of fraternal strife will never again be heard on the North American Continent."

"God grant that it may be so," he fervently rejoined; "and if my old blood is needed as a sacrifice toward bringing about that glorious end, oh, how cheerfully will it be offered upon the altar of my country!"

"I think," he continued, "that I understand your meaning. You believe that this war will destroy slavery, and when it is gone there will remain no other cause sufficiently powerful to arm our hands against each other's lives."

"Yes, that is my opinion; but it would not be prudent to proclaim it from the house-tops."

"No, indeed! The time for doing that is yet afar off!"

It was late before we parted for the night, and when we did, the memory of my strange dream came back upon me with startling power, and it was long before slumber visited my eyelids.

The next day he returned to his home, and shortly afterward the Union army, under Gen. Buell, were drawn away to repel the invasion of Kentucky by Gen. Bragg. Scattered troops of Confederate cavalry were roaming through the country, but as yet they had committed few outrages, and, indeed, with the exception of helping themselves to whatever they needed, they furnished the citizens with few causes of complaint. But another class of marauders were gradually making their appearance under the name of par-

tisan rangers. The worst materials in the Confederate army were rapidly absorbed in these irregular bands. They were generally employed as quartermasters' and conscript officers' guards. There was not even a semblance of discipline among them. They went where they pleased, stayed as long as they pleased, and returned when they pleased, living at free quarters wherever they went and committing whatever outrages their devilish fancies might suggest. The citizens were, for the most part, unarmed, except those who were their accomplices, and often partners, in the robberies they committed. In the spring of 1863, when Bragg was preparing to place the Tennessee River between himself and the army of Rosecrans, these bands infested almost every part of North Alabama, and no citizen residing beyond the limits of a town or village could lay his head upon his pillow with a feeling of security. The secluded dell in which Mr. Johnson lived had been an effectual protection against their visits, and as he rarely went from home he had thus far been unmolested. But one day, by some untoward chance, three stragglers found their way to his dwelling. They were hungry, they said, and asked for something to eat and a feed for their horses. This was promptly furnished. While eating they talked of the war, of the cowardice and brutality of the Yankees, and boasted loudly of their own exploits. Mr. Johnson was disgusted, but prudently held his tongue. When their hunger had been appeased, they went to the stable to saddle their horses. One of them immediately proposed an exchange for a fine gelding belonging to Mr. Johnson. His own horse, he said, he knew was a great deal the best animal, but his back was badly hurt, and as they had some hard work before them it would be cruel to ride him in that fix if it could be helped. Mr. Johnson was satisfied of the excellence of the trooper's horse, but

preferred to keep his own for various reasons, one of which (though he did not express it) was, that he had heard the doughty warrior, within the last half hour, boast that he had taken him from "a d—n—d old Union traitor in Tennessee."

The unwelcome visitors rode away. When out of hearing, as they supposed, a tall and powerful man of not more than twenty-two years of age, whose smooth and almost beardless face contrasted strongly with the hairy visages of his companions, and whose bearing denoted some kind of authority over them, drew up his horse and made a rapid survey of the locality.

"By jingo!" he exclaimed, "this would be a glorious spot for Captain Walter's headquarters, if Stanley's d—n—d blue-bellies ever get down here."

"Yes," answered one of the men, "it's mighty purty, but in gineral I keeps an eye out for safety, and I don't think this place would suit me edzactly."

"Safety! why, Bob, that's just what I was thinking about. I was born in seven mile of this hollow, and I have knocked about these mountains considerable in my time, and I never knowed about this place before. It would take a regiment of Yankees three months to find it if they didn't have nothing else to do but to hunt for it."

"I mought agree with you in that, and I don't know but I do. But just tell me, Sergeant Miller, what is to keep that d—n—d old rip up yonder," pointing to the house, "from telling 'em!"

"A pistol-bullet or the end of my horse's halter would do that if he showed any signs of trying to make us uncomfortable. But I don't think he would if we did not impose upon him too much!"

"Well, sergeant, for a lad of your experience, and I will say cuteness, too, you are mighty easy to be fooled. Or,

may be, you was watching that good-looking woman too close to have an eye on her dad. As sure as gun's iron, he's a dead out Union feller; and if you want to sleep safe, don't spread your blanket down in his cabin when there's a company of Yankees in ten mile of it!"

"What did you see, Bob, to make you think so? I never noticed anything amiss. Did you, Tom Simmons?"

"Yes," said the individual thus addressed, who was a coarse, heavily built man, of forty years or upwards, with shock hair and beard, and keen blue eyes set deep in his head, which were always alive with watchfulness and yet always seemed to be in repose. It was a common remark among his companions, that, although Tom Simmons was never known to look a man in the face, he was never in company with any one for five minutes every feature of whose face he could not describe even to the most minute peculiarity. This remarkable faculty made him extremely useful as a spy or a scout, although his thieving and plundering propensities sometimes rendered it hazardous to employ him, since he never failed to gratify these, no matter what neglect of duty or what danger of detection it involved.

To the question of his officer he answered deliberately. "Yes. I watched him when Bob Jenkins was bragging about things there warnt no needcessity for telling, supposin' them to be true, which all on 'em wasn't, and if he didn't think we three ought to be hung in short order, I'm no judge of snakes!"

"Ah! is that so? Well, the Yankees are not here yet, and in the mean time we can make the most of the good feeding and foraging we have found!"

"And if I don't capture that gray horse," said Simmons, "before another week is out, I shall consider myself in d—n—d bad luck!"

"So be it!" said Sergeant Miller; "but now we must

be traveling. Trot! We must get to Maysville to-night!"

Tobias Wilson had been hunting that morning, and, returning a little footsore, he had taken off his shoes and seated himself under a ledge of rocks to bathe his feet. While engaged in this operation his grandfather's departing visitors had reined up within ten feet of the place where he was sitting, and he had listened, securely hidden by the rocks, to the whole of the foregoing conversation. As soon as the horsemen were out of sight, he ran to the house, and related what he had heard to his mother and grandfather. As the boy proceeded with his story, Mrs. Wilson's face became ashy pale. With her father it was different. At first his features betrayed no unusual emotion, but as his grandson went on there was a stern knitting of his brow, and the lines about his mouth grew deeper and firmer. For a minute or more after the story was ended, not a word was spoken. The silence was broken by Mr. Johnson.

"I feared it would come to this, my daughter, and I have been thinking of removing you to Nashville. Tobias can go with you, and after you are comfortably situated he can return to me. We must not leave the crop untended. I have barely enough money to support you for a twelvemonth, and no source to look to for a new supply except our growing crop."

"I cannot leave you, father," firmly replied his daughter. "If you are in danger here, I must share it. I should feel more uneasiness when away from you than by your side; and besides, I do not see how you could get on without me. If you and Tobias could do your own cooking and washing, you cannot weave your own cloth, or make and mend your clothing. If you have any apprehensions for my nerves, dismiss them. I am not a fine lady now, what-

ever I may have been, and if the worst comes I can mould bullets, as my grandmother did when Bean's Station was attacked by the Indians."

In that family there was no affectation of any kind. What one said the others were persuaded was said in earnest, and it was rare that either argument or remonstrance was resorted to for the purpose of changing an opinion once decidedly expressed, or a resolution once taken.

Mr. Johnson did not seem to be surprised at his daughter's determination, and made no effort to overcome it. After a brief time given to reflection, he said:

"Be it as you will, Margaret! though I had much rather that you left us. My heart would be lighter if I only knew that you were safe!"

"Safe, father! what danger do I incur by remaining at home? and who is likely to injure me?"

"You may be safe from personal danger, my child, and I think you are; but you are in danger of being called on to witness that which will be very painful to you. Yet even that is uncertain, and, with God's blessing, we may escape."

But little more was said at the time, and the subject of their conversation was not again referred to until the next morning at the breakfast table, when Mr. Johnson abruptly asked his grandson if his rifle was in good order. Upon receiving an affirmative reply, he continued: "I have not used mine lately, and it needs cleaning up. After breakfast, I wish you to wash it out for me and oil the lock. See, too, that the powder horns are filled, and that there is a good supply of bullets in our pouches."

When the morning meal was finished, Mr. Johnson geared his own horse and went out to the field, saying to his grandson:

"You need not come to the field this morning, Tobias. When you have put the guns in order and moulded the

bullets, you can chop out the weeds and grass from the potato patch. I shall stop work at twelve o'clock for the day."

Mr. Johnson conjectured that his dangerous visitors would not return before the succeeding day, and perhaps he might not hear of them for a much longer period, but he was certain that they would come sooner or later, and as he could not tell what time they would select, he thought it best to be always on his guard. The next day passed, a week went by, and no footsteps had pressed the lonely glen except those of its owner and his little family. Mrs. Wilson, with the usual hopefulness of woman, believed that the danger had gone by, if, indeed, it ever existed. Not so her father. He knew it would be just as rational to expect that the bloodhound would lose the scent within a hundred yards of his prey, as that these marauders would fail to return to a place where they knew that there was an abundance of provision and forage to be had, and at least one remarkably fine horse to be stolen. He had made up his mind that they should not again trespass upon his hospitality, and that any attempt at force should be met by determined resistance.

Tobias Wilson was well aware of his grandfather's feelings and intentions, and equally as determined that the first indication of violence should be the signal for sending a leaden messenger to the heart of one of the robbers. The years which had passed since he was first introduced to the reader had added to his stature, though he was still slender and apparently delicate. Any one, however, who calculated upon this seeming feebleness of body, would have been grievously disappointed. His limbs, though small, were muscular and firmly knit, and they had been hardened by that kind of labor and exercise best calculated to develop the physical man. His grandfather had been celebrated as an

amateur wrestler and boxer in his youth, and believing that these attainments might be of service, and could be no disadvantage to a peaceable and well-disposed youth, he had not failed to impart all his knowledge to his grandson. Added to these physical advantages, Tobias Wilson carried in his bosom the heart of a lion. At the age of twenty-one he could remember nothing he had ever feared except the half-angry, half-reproachful look of his mother, when he had said or done something which was not in accordance with her strict notions of the conduct which best became a Christian and a gentleman.

His grandfather had been his teacher in everything, but he was so gentle and so indulgent in his own family, and his reproof was always so mild, that the idea of punishment, as connected with it, had never found a place in the young man's breast. He was almost as ignorant now as he was when a child, of the deep and concentrated passions which, in other years, had struggled long and fearfully with the better nature of his parent, and which were still so far unsubdued that they were at any time liable, under great provocation, to break out with the sudden and destructive violence of a West Indian tornado. But of this the boy, as both mother and grandfather called him, was ignorant. He felt a little awed, as no one of his age could help feeling, in presence of that strong and decided nature, but that awe was unmingled with fear. A new leaf was now opened for his perusal. A stern and relentless purpose had settled in the old man's bosom, and the evidences of it could not be entirely suppressed, either in the tones of his voice or his general demeanor. Tobias Wilson observed the change, but as he felt well assured that it boded no opposition to his own resolves, he made no comment and asked no questions.

CHAPTER III.

NEARLY two weeks had passed. Mr. Johnson was standing in the passage of his house just after the mid-day meal, when he observed three men riding up the bank of the little stream, of whose identity he had no manner of doubt. They were yet more than a quarter of a mile distant, and as his plan of proceeding had long since been fully decided upon, there was ample time to make the few preparations which he deemed advisable. Locking the doors and barring the windows of the room in which he was accustomed to sleep, he went with his grandson into the room occupied by his daughter. This room was then carefully secured inside, loop-holes had already been made by removing, in places, the "chinking and daubin'" from between the logs of the cabin. Their rifles were taken down and examined; their bullet-pouches and hunting-knives slung over their shoulders, and then Mr. Johnson placed himself at the little square opening dignified with the name of window, while Tobias seated himself on the floor, his rifle resting in one of the loop-holes which commanded the approach to the stable. Everything had been arranged beforehand, and their dispositions were made with a quiet celerity not in the least resembling nervous hurry, but which, nevertheless, precluded conversation while it was progressing.

When the riders stopped at *the bars* through which admission to the yard was obtained, the closed doors and the stillness within and about the cabin led them to believe that it was untenanted.

"Hello!" shouted the sergeant.

"What do you want?" was the answer from the window.

"Something to eat for man and horse; we have had a hard ride to-day, and we are tired and hungry!"

"You will have to ride still farther, for you can get nothing here."

"We'll see about that!" answered the sergeant, deliberately dismounting from his horse and tying him to the fence. "I suspected you of being a d—n—d old traitor before, and I know it now!"

"I give you fair warning," said Mr. Johnson, in a raised and angry tone, "if you cross that fence with a hostile purpose, you are a dead man!"

The freebooter had the reputation of being a bold and daring man, but as he had no inclination to throw his life away, the tones of the voice that now addressed him were sufficiently determined to make him hesitate. His companions had also dismounted. Taking the precaution to keep their horses between them and the cabin, they held a brief, whispered consultation with each other.

"He's got help in thar," said Tom Simmons, "or he wouldn't talk so big; but it can't be no great deal, or he wouldn't lock up and fortyfy hisself. Let's divide; if he's got friends in thar we'll find it out, and then there's nothin' for it but to leave and wait until some night when we catch him asleep!"

This plan was at once adopted, and while Sergeant Miller remained in front, sheltered by the fence and the horses, the other two made a circuit and approached the cabin from different sides. On his side Bob Jenkins met no opposition: Tom Simmons had gained the rear of the stable, as he supposed without attracting observation; but as he came around in front, within twenty yards of the house, a sharp voice commanded him to "halt!" The redoubtable

Tom was a little startled at first, for this was not the voice of the man who held the brief colloquy with his sergeant, and it verified his suspicion that the old man was not alone. He detected the loop-hole, and saw at a glance that he could, by a quick movement, easily avoid that danger, but he did not know what he would encounter on the other side, and thought it best to come to a parley.

"Well, I am halted! What'll you have?"

"That, sir, is what I wish to know of you!"

"Haven't we told you we were tired and hungry, and wanted something to eat?"

"Yes, and you were told that you could get nothing here; and now, sir, if you have any regard for your safety, you had better be off!"

"Ef I could only git you out'n that cabin, my chap, its more'n likely you'd be thinking on your own safety; and may be I'll have a chance yet to larn you how to treat soldiers who are fighting to save your *truck* from the d—n—d Yankees who are rampaging over these here mountains this very day."

"When we want your help against the Yankees we will let you know it; but until then we do not intend to be plundered and robbed by every———"

Tobias Wilson's speech was cut suddenly short, for Tom Simmons, who had been gradually and almost imperceptibly moving toward the door of the stable, now sprang suddenly within it, and, resting his revolver in a crack between the logs, fired with a quick but certain aim at the loop-hole through which the foregoing conversation had been carried on. Tobias Wilson saw the motion, and at once divining what it meant, fell with his face to the floor. It was well for him that he did so. The delay of an instant would have been fatal to him, for the ball passed directly through the loop-hole and buried itself in the logs on the opposite side of the room.

While the foregoing conversation was progressing, Sergeant Miller had led away the horses of the party, and secured them under the steep bank of the stream. Mr. Johnson might have interfered very effectually with this proceeding, but he was determined to act only in self-defense, and shrank from firing the first shot. When the attempt upon the life of his grandson was made, it was too late; Sergeant Miller was safe, and Jenkins, by making a wide detour, was able to rejoin him without risk.

Both of them now unslung their carbines, and, availing themselves of every sheltering object, again cautiously approached the house. On his side Tom Simmons was in doubt whether the silence which followed his shot was the stillness of death, or whether his intended victim was watching an opportunity to return it. Acting upon a sudden impulse, he had brought matters to a point where no compromise was possible, and nothing more remained to be done but to take the cabin by storm, or retreat. He might set fire to the cabin and shoot down the inmates as they were driven out by the flames, but that did not suit his own views or the views of his comrades, since it involved the destruction of the booty they designed appropriating to themselves. While thus cogitating, his eye rested on the gray steed he so much coveted.

"Well, my beauty," he said, walking up to the horse and patting him on the neck, "I'll make sure on you this time, and when I come agin, we'll try for the rest!" So saying, he took down a plow bridle, the only one in the stable, and put it on the noble animal. In his approach he had "let down" the fence at the back of the stable, and there was now no obstruction between him and the wood which skirted the mountain. Mounting the horse, and lying flat on his neck, he rode through the door, turned the horse's head toward the mountain, and put him at once almost to

the top of his speed. But Mr. Simmons's motions had been watched by an eye as keen and vigilant as that of the lynx. The horse had not made twenty bounds when the sharp crack of a rifle reverberated along the mountain sides. The lawless freebooter, who, as he sped away, had raised himself to a half-sitting posture, now rose straight up; in a moment his head dropped upon his breast, his hand relinquished its hold upon the rein, and he fell heavily to the ground. The horse made a few more leaps forward, until finding itself unrestrained, it turned rapidly toward the stable.

Miller and Jenkins were in full view of Simmons when he fell, and did not for an instant doubt that he had received his death wound. They were too familiar with such scenes to entertain a hope that he would ever join in another marauding expedition. The number of assailants and defenders were now equal, and with the advantage possessed by the latter, the robbers despaired of a successful termination of their enterprise. A retreat was inevitable. This was easy; but it involved the abandonment of their comrade, which they were not willing to do, partly, let us suppose, from a touch of human feeling still lingering in their bosoms, but chiefly because his arms and accoutrements were valuable, even if he had nothing else about his person, and they felt accordingly no disposition to let them fall into the hands of the victors. After some delay, Sergeant Miller called out to Mr. Johnson:

"You have murdered a Confederate soldier rather than give us a meal's victuals, and the consequences must be upon your own head. Do you mean to let us carry him away peaceably, or must we burn your infernal den and bury him by its light?"

"You can do what you please," was the answer, "outside of my yard; but if you cross my fence, or lay a finger

on my property within rifle range, I shall serve you as he has been served. Take him away as soon as you can. I hope he is not dead, but he deserved it if he is. I give you half an hour to carry him off!"

Miller and Jenkins promptly availed themselves of the privilege accorded them, and in less than half the time mentioned were on their way down the little stream with the dead body of Simmons lashed to his horse.

That night her father again addressed Mrs. Wilson.

"It is certain, my daughter, that you cannot now remain here in security. There is no telling at what hour of the day or the night we may have a band of robbers upon us. Tobias and I may escape to the mountain, but you will certainly be subject to insult, and it may be to worse things. You had better prepare to go to Nashville to-morrow."

"I shall stay with you, father, be the consequences what they may. I will not deny that I am a little frightened at what may follow from this sad day's work, but I will stay, nevertheless, and hope to be of service rather than an incumbrance."

For several days Mr. Johnson and his grandson carried their rifles to the field, and one of them watched while the other worked. A neighbor, so called in that wild region, though his house was some seven miles distant, had been on a visit to Huntsville, and on his return, finding that he could not reach his own house before nightfall, took "the short cut" through the valley and over the mountain by Mr. Johnson's house. It was not much past seven o'clock, but the darkness of night had settled upon that secluded spot, and not liking to undertake a journey across the mountain at such an hour, he called to ask a lodging for the night. From him Mr. Johnson learned for the first time the story which had been spread abroad in relation to the death of Simmons. It was said that he, Simmons, had called in a peace-

able and orderly manner with his comrades, to obtain some refreshment, after a hard day's scouting, and had been shot down in cold blood by some one inside of the cabin. He further learned that the neighbors had been only deterred from executing Lynch's law upon the inhabitants of the little valley by the presence of Union cavalry in that vicinity. Mr. Johnson was advised by his neighbor, who happened to be a strong friend of the Union, to change his residence at once, and was offered shelter in his house, which he thought more secure from the fact of being in a thickly settled country.

"I thank you, Mr. Rogers," was the reply, "both for the information you have given me and for your kind offer. And I beg that you will not consider it uncourteous if I do not accept it. This house is mine. When the great secession orator, Mr. Yancey, traveled through this country, he told us that every cabin was a castle, from which we had a right to expel any intruding foot. It was about the only thing in his speech with which I agreed, and I am resolved to put it to the test. I shall harm no one except in my own just defense; but here I shall stay, at least until my crop is gathered, and those who interfere with me must take the consequences. I shall be very grateful, however, if you can persuade my daughter to go with you."

"I will try, Mr. Johnson. And I tell you further, that there is a plan on foot to arm the Union citizens for their own defense. I saw Gen. S. yesterday. He will supply us with arms, and we can then protect ourselves against such roving parties as have visited you, even when aided, as they are, and will be, by some of the worst of our neighbors."

At this point Tobias Wilson for the first time joined in the conversation. It was his custom to listen in grave and respectful silence to the utterances of his grandfather; but

he could not restrain himself when he heard that arms would be furnished to such Union citizens as would use them in their own and the country's defense.

"Tell General S.," he said, "that if he will give us guns, and powder, and ball, a thousand loyal hearts will thank him, and a thousand loyal hands will be found ready to use them."

"I shall do so," was the reply of Mr. Rogers. "But he will be in this neighborhood in two weeks, and you can see him yourself. That is, if you will go with me to a place of greater safety. If you remain here, I do not think that your grandfather or yourself will be among the living this day fortnight."

"It may be so," answered Mr. Johnson, again taking up the conversation. "God only can foreknow the future; but I will not leave my house to be burned, and my crops destroyed, by a band of thieves and robbers, who desecrate the name of my country by calling themselves its defenders. I will perish upon my own doorsill before even the pittance I am able and willing to give in charity, shall be wrested from me by violence, or extorted from me by threats."

"You are right, Mr. Johnson, in one sense, but wrong in another. Perhaps two others, for there are two views of this matter which do not seem to have struck you. The first is, that probably no open attack will be made upon you. Your house may be fired at night, and you may be murdered while trying to escape from the flames. You may be shot down while at work in your field, or disposed of in many other ways, without a chance of resistance. On my honor, I believe you to be in great danger of some such fate every hour that you abide in this out-of-the-way place, where murder is so easy of accomplishment, and detection of the criminal so difficult. The other view is, that even if openly attacked, you may, in your defense, destroy the

life of some one who is guilty of being found in bad company certainly, but in reality innocent of any intention to commit robbery, or shed blood, except under circumstances which in his view of the law would justify the act."

"I understand your first suggestion," replied Mr. Johnson, "and admit its force. My resolution was taken after long and anxious thought, and this was a contingency too palpable to be overlooked. I know that it is one which cannot be effectually guarded against, supposing your enemy to be wily and determined; but I calculate somewhat upon my own and my grandson's vigilance, and the watchfulness of our dogs, and still more upon the overconfidence of those who may be disposed to do us an injury. Your second suggestion I do not think I clearly understand. I have never thought of taking the life of any one who does not come here with a robber's or a murderer's purpose; and do not see how I can incur the risk of shedding innocent blood."

"I did not say *innocent* blood," was the rejoinder. "My remark was comparative. I neither say, nor believe, that any innocent man will come here upon an errand of violence. But comparatively good men may be deceived by false representations. We know not a few who *were* honest and kind-hearted in other days, but who *are* the companions of robbers and murderers. They have not lost their horror of the crime,—they are only blinded to the brutality of the criminals, because those criminals are called *Southern patriots*. Such men may be reclaimed: nay, more, many of them have been reclaimed, and the scales are daily falling from the eyes of others."

"God speed the good work," said the old man, fervently. "No one shall be more ready than I to aid and encourage them to the extent of my poor means. But," he added more sternly, "they must give evidence of repentance be-

fore they can expect to be separated from the bloody crew with whom their lot has been voluntarily cast. When they become good citizens I will extend to them the right hand of fellowship. Until then, I cannot allow them to inflict injury upon me or mine with impunity, because I have hopes of their future repentance. If they come here it can be for no good, and I shall make no distinction between visitors whose errand is the same."

"Nor would I have you to do so, and I must have expressed myself poorly to be so understood. What I mean to argue is, that by getting out of the way for the time, you may be spared the necessity of a mortal contest with men who, I believe, will before long discard their errors, and become valuable auxiliaries in the cause of right and of liberty. I do not ask you to *spare*, but to *avoid* them."

"And that, unfortunately, is just what I cannot do. If I leave here, my crop goes to waste, even if no strolling vagabond should take a fancy to appropriate it to himself. Everything I have exclusive of my crop would not support my daughter and myself for more than a twelvemonth; so you see, Mr. Rogers, I must stay or starve. Take my daughter with you, and I shall be very grateful; as for Tobias and myself, I believe we are of one mind, and that is, to brave the worst."

The kind-hearted Rogers went into the opposite room, and with some difficulty persuaded Mrs. Wilson to take up her abode for some time at his house. She would not be far removed from her father and her son, and she reasoned, rightly, that they would feel more at ease, and be more at liberty to concert measures for their security, when they knew that she was beyond the reach of immediate danger.

And so the next morning, Mr. Rogers departed with Mrs. Wilson in his company,—a single horse, besides the

one she rode, being sufficient to "pack" her small wardrobe over the precipitous path they must needs traverse.

Another week had been added to the cycle of the year. The warning they had received had not been neglected. Everything had been done, which could be, to guard against surprise, and, in case of overpowering necessity, to secure a safe retreat. Resistance to the death was the fixed and unalterable purpose of both the old man and the young; but neither of them had any intention of throwing away their lives in a useless struggle. They had accordingly discussed and agreed on a place of safe retreat in the mountains, in the event of being assailed by overwhelming numbers. In the mean time, they watched and worked by turns in the daytime, and watched and slept by turns at night. Their immunity thus far did not at all abate their vigilance, and they allowed nothing to separate them until their stock of meal was exhausted, and it was necessary that it should be replenished.

Early on a bright summer morning in July, 1863, Tobias Wilson set out for the mill, some six miles distant, with a bag of corn under him and his rifle across his knees. It was long past noon when he returned. Riding up to the cabin, he found the doors fastened as they were that morning when he left home for the mill, after his grandfather had gone to the field. Looking under a slab of wood where it was their habit to leave the key, since his mother had taken up her residence with Mr. Rogers, he found it where he had placed it in the morning. The doors were locked as usual, and nothing about the place indicated that it had been visited since morning. A vague feeling of apprehension crept over him. He went to the stable; his grandfather's horse was not there, nor were there any indications that the stable had been entered by any one during the day. The dogs came whining and leap-

ing for joy around him. The barn-yard fowls were scratching in the dirt, and a couple of calves were munching at a stack of fodder. "Something is wrong," he murmured. "Grandfather has not been home to dinner. Where can he have gone and what has taken him away?"

Then a fearful suspicion crossed his mind. "My God! can he be murdered?" After a moment's thought, he shook off this impression. "No," he said, "no; in that case they would have robbed the house, and probably burned it. No; I don't think they have killed him, but may be they have captured and taken him off. I must see."

So saying, he started to the field which he knew his grandfather intended that morning to plow. As he walked on through the springing corn and across the "turning rows," the stillness which everywhere reigned had its influence upon his spirits. "God preserve me," he murmured, "from this trial! I promised my mother that I would always try to be gentle and good. I have tried to keep that promise. When I went to the 'Musters,' and other boys called me 'Miss Nancy,' I have turned away without touching them, although I knew I could break every bone in their bodies. I have borne this, and I can bear more; but if I find that old man's white hairs stained with blood, may God forsake me if I do not pay back every drop with tenfold interest."

After turning the spur of the mountain, he had not walked fifty yards before he saw his grandfather's horse, with the gear on him, and still attached to the plow, lazily feeding upon the growing corn. To the young man this was a painful indication that the animal had been long at liberty. It would not have been grazing so leisurely if its appetite had not been nearly appeased. Passing by the unconscious beast, he walked on, following the direction of the latest plowed furrow. Before he had pro-

ceeded many steps, it came abruptly to an end. There were the marks of a struggle, and the indentation of many feet in the newly turned up ground. There were also unmistakable indications that the horse, neglected or forgotten in the struggle, had turned about and afterward roved at will over the field, dragging the plow after him. The footprints led toward a gorge in the mountains, and there, within a hundred yards of the spot where the struggle had taken place, and just beyond the field, he found the body of his grandfather. Two rifle balls had passed through his body, either one of which would have been fatal. There he lay, still warm, and the expression of his face varying but little from that he wore in life, in his serious moods. For many minutes the young man scarcely moved, but gazed in speechless agony upon all that remained of what he had most reverenced in the world. Then he stooped and kissed the corpse. He did not feel the pulse. He did not put his hand on the bloody breast to see if the heart still beat. He knew instinctively that naught but a dead body was lying before him. Slowly he went back, unharnessed the horse, led him to the spot where the corpse was lying, and with the plow line tied it fast upon his back. Then carefully but moodily he led the animal to the now desolate cabin. Arriving there, he lifted the body from the horse, and laid it gently upon its accustomed bed. Going out again, he put his own horse and that of his grandfather in the stable, and fed them well. He had eaten nothing himself during the day, and finding no cold meats in his mother's "cupboard," he broiled some ham and baked a "hoe cake." After this frugal meal was concluded, he called his dogs into the house, barred the door, and placing his own and his grandfather's rifle (which he had picked up on his way home) near the head of his bed, prepared to pass the night alone with the dead.

What were his thoughts during that night of horror? No one ever knew. When I saw him afterward, he told me many things, but nothing of that night's vigils, slumbers, resolves, or struggles. I could only guess from what followed, that during that night of companionship with his grandfather's corps, a stern, relentless, merciless purpose settled upon his heart, whose appropriate fruits were blood and tears.

CHAPTER IV.

The next day, leaving the dead body in the cabin, he mounted his horse, and rode across the mountain to the house of Mr. Rogers, where his mother was now residing. He seized her hand when they met, and almost crushed it in his nervous grasp. "Mother," he said briefly, sternly, and without a word of preparation, "grandpa is dead." For a minute or more his mother sunk under the terrible announcement. Her first exclamation was, "Oh, my poor father!" A flood of tears gushed from her eyes, and her almost Amazonian form drooped and shrunk as if the winds of winter had swept over the lily in its bloom. Then she murmured, "Dead! dead, my son! How did he die?"

"He was murdered; murdered by assassins."

"Murdered by assassins!" she answered fiercely. "Murdered! and you with him when the deed was done, and you are now here to tell it! My God! can it be that a son of mine stood by and saw those gray hairs dabbled in blood, and yet lived to tell the tale?"

"I was not by him, mother. I was no witness to the bloody deed, but I *know* it was murder. And, oh! mother," he continued, striking his hand upon his breast, "if you knew the hell that is burning here, you would tremble for the consequences which may follow the words you have now spoken. My thoughts were dark and bloody enough before. God grant they may not lead me to a retribution He will not pardon!"

"Forgive me, Tobias, if in this terrible agony I have

uttered words to wound you. I know not rightly what I said; but I know you well, my boy, better, oh, how much better than all the world beside! I know you to be true and strong and braver than the lion in his hungry mood. I did not mean to rouse you to revenge. It would be deep sin to take into our hands what the Lord has declared is His own, and avenge, according to our poor notions, deeds which He has himself promised HE 'will repay.' It may be sweet, but it should be enough for us that it is forbidden."

"Yes," he replied gloomily, "vengeance is forbidden, but not *justice*. I must have justice."

There was more in the tone, than the words, to create apprehension in the deeply religious mind of his mother; and looking at him now attentively for the first time since they had met, she read in the stern lines which had settled on his face something which made her shudder. He looked ten years older than he had done the day before, and she felt instinctively that there had been a mighty change within as well as without. How far it had already progressed beyond her guidance, she could not fathom. The tears were streaming from her eyes, but his were dry. She wiped them away, and again looked fixedly upon him before replying.

"That is a dangerous mode of reasoning, my child; but we will not talk of that now. Tell me all, at least all you know of this sad business."

So saying, she led the way to her own room, and listened with quivering agony to all her son had to relate. When the dark story was ended, she threw herself on the bed buried her face in the pillows, and sobbed as if her heart would break. The young man watched his mother in silence, but even while he watched, the bloody thoughts which had been coming and going in his mind like shadowy visions, took form and substance, and settled themselves in his heart

forever. Rising slowly, he walked from the room without disturbing her, and making his presence known to the family, inquired for Mr. Rogers. When that gentleman was called in, he shook him warmly by the hand, and then said in a husky voice:

"You will be sorry to learn, Mr. Rogers, that your friendly warning has proved to be of no avail. My grandfather was murdered yesterday while I was at the mill."

"Good God!" ejaculated his kind-hearted friend. "Is this so? Has my old neighbor been really murdered on his own doorstep? What devil from hell could have done so foul and unprovoked a deed?"

"It was not exactly at his own door. He was surprised in his field, and dragged into the hollow of the mountain, where I found him with two bullets through his body."

And then with stern calmness he repeated the story he had related to his mother a few minutes before.

When he had ended, Mr. Rogers said, "Two bullets! Were there but two of the assassins?"

"I think there were more, but I did not examine the footprints in the corn field particularly. I shall do so when I return, and measure them besides. Trust me that I shall neglect nothing which will lead to a detection of his murderers. Upon that matter, however, I will confer with you to-morrow. My present business is to beg your aid, and that of one or two of your neighbors whom you know to be trustworthy, to assist me in burying the body."

"Of course you shall have it. We can bring him over the mountain before sundown to my house, and bury him to-morrow at any hour to suit your mother."

"I need not say how sincerely and earnestly I thank you; but, Mr. Rogers, he must be buried there. I want that grave by me as long as I am able to watch over it. If you will come over to-morrow morning with one or two

of your friends, a surgeon and a minister of the gospel, bringing my mother with you, I shall be deeply grateful. I have brought his horse for her to ride over."

"Everything shall be as you wish, my young friend."

"Thank you, sir. And now if you will allow me to have some conversation with my mother, I will ride back to keep a solitary vigil by the dead."

"No, Tobias, that must not be. My son Thomas shall go with you. He has an excellent rifle; he is young, strong, and fearless; and if these devils should come back to finish their bloody work, they will be apt to find it a more difficult job than murdering an old man in his field. Go in and see your mother; I will have him ready in twenty minutes."

"I do not think they will come back; but, nevertheless, I shall be glad of Tom's company."

Mr. Rogers went to call his son, and Tobias Wilson sought his mother's room to explain the arrangements which had been made, and bid her good-by.

In less than half an hour the two young men were riding slowly toward that solitary glen, which but one short day before had been stained with so foul a murder. Turning the sharp angle of a corn field which ran up some distance on the side of the mountain, they suddenly encountered a horseman approaching from the opposite direction, who had been completely hidden from view by the thicket of weeds and bushes which grew along the worm fence. He was a man of about fifty years of age, with a countenance which would have been pleasing, but for the shaggy brows which overhung the eyes, and eyes themselves that never by any chance emitted a ray of gladness or of kindness. The whole face betokened resolution and strong common sense. In different times and with different training he might have made a hillside preacher, such as would have

won the heart of John Balfour, of Burleigh. As it was, he had passed thus far through life without having established any other character than that of a zealous Baptist, bigoted, intolerant, and unforgiving. He had never been known to express the slightest respect for any man's opinions when they differed from his own, and he firmly believed that every politician who was not a Democrat, was a knave, and every Christian who was not a Baptist, was a hypocrite. He was well known to Thomas Rogers, and Tobias Wilson had met him at more than one public gathering during the exciting times of 1860. The path was barely wide enough for two horsemen to pass, and Thomas Rogers, who stood not a little in awe of his stern acquaintance, reined his horse to one side, and bowed his head respectfully as he said, "Good day, Parson Williams." "Good day, Thomas," was the rejoinder. "I hope your father's family are well." He had never checked his horse for an instant, and had not deigned to look a second time at Tobias Wilson, or acknowledge his presence even by a nod. By this time he had passed the young men, and rode on without once turning his head. It might have been better for him if he had done so. Tobias Wilson did not follow his example, but, halting his own steed, turned in the saddle, and honored both horse and rider with a keen and searching gaze, which was not removed until they were hidden by the intervening bushes. Had Parson Williams observed that look and guessed the suspicions which caused it, he could hardly have ridden on in such seemingly conscious security.

A little higher up the mountain, Tobias Wilson, speaking for the first time since the unexpected meeting with the Rev. Mr. Williams, said:

"What can that man be doing here?"

"I have been trying to think," answered Rogers, "but

I cannot. Nor could we have found out by asking him. I did not ask, because I knew I should only get some surly answer, such as, 'Mind your own business, boy,' or the like."

"I am glad you did not ask him; but that need not hinder us from asking one another, and indulging in such speculations as our observations may suggest. This path leads nowhere but to my grandfather's house, except that there is a cattle path on the top of the mountain which leads around to Jim Biles's cabin. You know every foot of these mountains, Tom, as well as I do. Is not what I say true?"

His companion mused a moment, and then replied: "It certainly is. He must have come from Jim Biles's, for you know he would as soon put his foot in a den of rattlesnakes as to pass within fifty yards of your grandfather's house."

"True enough, Tom,—unless it was to kill him."

"To kill him! Why, what on earth do you mean? Parson Williams is known to be bitter and unforgiving; but he lived here before we were born, and in all that time there has been no whisper against his character as an upright and law-abiding man."

"Don't I know it? Don't I know that he has been held up as a pattern for the rising generation by every gray-haired fool in the neighborhood? But let me get through with my questions, and then we can the better form our own conclusions. Did you notice his horse?"

"Certainly. I have known the horse for four years. Everybody who knows Williams knows old Scuball."

"So much the better. Did you notice that he had lost a shoe?"

"No. But," he continued after a brief pause, "now that I think of it, I did notice that he limped."

"Exactly; and the reason was that he had lost a shoe. There is no smith on that side, and the horse fell lame in

crossing the mountain with one bare foot. Another question,—did you notice his gun?"

"Yes, particularly; for I had never seen him carry a gun before. It was an old-fashioned, smooth-bore yager, which carries a bigger ball than a musket."

"Well, now you have answered all the questions I desire to ask at present, I will give you my thoughts, conjectures, suspicions, or whatever you please to call them. There is within ten miles of my grandfather's house but two members of Mr. Williams's church, both of them bitter and malignant secessionists. Both of them with sons in the Confederate army. Both of them known enemies of my grandfather, who they have often been heard to declare ought to be hung, as a traitor, to the nearest sapling. There are but three entrances to the valley in which we live. One up the stream, which is too public to be traveled by assassins in broad day, and besides, I myself went out and came in on that road that very day, and neither in going nor coming were any horse tracks visible. If there had been any, I should have seen them; for we had been warned by your father, and I never moved a step beyond our yard without careful examination of the ground. By that road then they did not enter our field. Another road is the one we are now traveling. I examined it this morning as closely as if my soul's salvation depended upon the discovery, but it exhibited no sign of the footstep of man or beast. The other leads down the gorge from Jim Biles's cabin, some seven miles away. That one has not yet been examined. But stop; we are now at a point where some further discovery may be made. There is the path to Biles's. Tie your horse, and let us follow it a little way."

They dismounted accordingly, and tying their horses to some bushes, proceeded along the narrow pathway, not treading directly in it, but each keeping a little on one side.

The ground was hard and dry, and though there were several places where it seemed to have been very recently disturbed, it was impossible to decide positively that the disturbance had been caused by a horse's feet. In about two hundred yards they came to a small open space, on one side of which a large chestnut-tree was growing out of a mossy mound. The attention of Rogers was attracted by something at the root of the tree: approaching hastily, he picked it up, and found it to be a torn fragment of a newspaper. It was greasy in places, and crumbs of bread were sticking to it. There could be no mistaking the use to which it had been put. It had been wrapped around some bread and meat, and had been left on the ground by some one after his "snack" had been eaten. On further examination, the paper was discovered to be "The Baptist Record."

"Put it away, Tom," said Wilson sternly, but in a voice so low as to be almost a whisper; "put it away carefully. And here," he added, stooping and picking up something from the mossy bank, "here we have something else."

It was a cow's horn, well boiled and cleaned, but without being trimmed or ornamented in any way. There was a hole bored in the small or solid end, and a strong leathern string run through it.

"It's the drinking cup from the spring!" exclaimed Rogers. "The rascal has brought it here, and when his meal was finished he was too lazy to carry it back. Many's the sweet drink I've taken from that horn in the last five years, and if we had not come along, it would have been lost, all from that cursed fellow's laziness!"

"Perhaps he had darker things to think of. But come along, we will take it back for him and hang it in its old place on the red-berry sapling."

Walking to a rocky cliff some thirty yards distant, they

came to a remarkably cool but very small spring trickling down the face of the rocks. The cattle raisers had placed boards in such a way as to gather all the water from the little spring into two large troughs, and in this way managed to keep a supply for their stock in the driest season. The ground about the troughs was soft, though not absolutely muddy, the scanty supply escaping from the troughs not being sufficient to do more than keep the earth moist. Here the horse's tracks were distinctly visible. The rider appeared to have ridden directly to the trough, and to have dismounted while the animal was drinking. His foot-print where he had alighted was plainly visible. It was a large and rather broad foot which had been incased in coarse boots or heavy shoes, with iron tacks on the inside, from the ball of the foot to the toe, seemingly placed there to prevent the sole from wearing away at the point of greatest attrition. The horse's feet were equally well defined in many places, and it was plain that he had on but three shoes. When these discoveries had been made, the young men gazed at each other in silence. It was broken by Thomas Rogers, who said:

"Come, Tobe, we have got enough! The Devil himself could not raise a doubt that Parson Williams has been here this day. Let us take a drink from our old friend here," patting the horn, "and be off. There is much yet to do to-day!"

"Wait a moment, Tom! I want you to examine all the peculiarities of this human foot, and see me measure it exactly, both in its length and breadth."

"I don't see the use of it. We've got enough without it, and besides, I once heard a lawyer in Bellefonte argue to a jury that the print of a man's foot was the weakest of all evidence, because a man deliberately intending to act the scoundrel or the murderer, would be sure to put on

shoes of a different size and shape from those he usually wore. Still, if you wish it, I shall do as you ask, of course!"

"I do wish it! No matter what the lawyer said, *it is* evidence, and, besides, I expect to put it to another use, at least to make it help other evidence if it is not evidence itself."

Thomas Rogers gave close attention to all the peculiarities Tobias Wilson pointed out, though, to tell the truth, he thought in his heart some of them were no peculiarities at all. He saw the foot measured across the heel, across the ball of the foot, across the toe, and from heel to toe. When this was done, and the accuracy of the measurement tested several times, they each took a long and hearty draught from the horn, walked back to their horses, and rode slowly down the mountain to the chamber of the dead, which was watched only by the faithful dogs he had fed and caressed in his lifetime.

CHAPTER V.

They found the dogs locked within the house. Nothing had been disturbed. After a brief survey of the dead-room they locked it up as before, fed the dogs and horses, and started to the scene of the murder. There was now not more than three hours of daylight, and they could not afford to waste any part of that in preparing refreshments for themselves. Going directly to the point where the old man had begun his last furrow, they followed it toward the place of the last dread scene of his life. About half way they discovered where three men had entered the row behind the plowman, and cautiously followed his steps. Rogers proposed to trace these tracks to the point where they had entered the field, but Wilson interposed a decided negative.

"We will follow them," he said, "when we come back, but I wish to make a full examination yonder while the day lasts," pointing forward as he spoke. "We shall find the strongest 'signs' there, and if we put it off until to-morrow it may rain, and all the traces be obliterated."

While speaking, he had cut down four or five stalks of corn, and piling them, standing on end, against one another, formed a kind of stack to mark the place.

At the point where the furrow stopped they observed all the marks of a violent scuffle. The old man must have resisted his captors manfully. There were the prints of many feet deeply indented in the soil. The corn was broken here and there, and there was an appearance like that which

would have been made by the falling of a human body on the soft earth. There was some torn clothing, but nothing of a kind to be clearly identified,—it was white, and only showed that both assailants and assailed had probably been in their shirt-sleeves. Near by they picked up a heavy hickory club, but this could lead to nothing, for it had been fresh cut, and was probably growing upon the mountain side not an hour before the deed was done. Tobias Wilson made an earnest but unsatisfactory examination of the foot-prints. The soil was too loose and dry to retain well-defined impressions.

"I see it all," he muttered almost inarticulately. "He fought until they knocked him on the head with this murderous club, and then they dragged him into yonder hollow, where they thought he would not be found for many days, and shot him. Let us now go on to where the last act in this bloody tragedy was enacted."

They did not fail to scrutinize every foot of the way; but no further discovery was made. The ground where the body had been found was soaked with blood, but there was no other witness to tell that from hence a soul had winged its way to eternity. Up the ascent of the hollow there was a comparatively level space, over which the water in the rainy season did not rush in one compact volume, but spread out on either hand for many feet, gathering consequently much of the rich loam which was washed down from the mountain sides by the winter rains. Except near the middle of the plain, where the bed of the torrent was in wet weather, and which was a cattle path in summer, it was covered with a heavy undergrowth of paw-paws, hickory bushes, and the tall rank iron weed. To this place Thomas Rogers made his way, while his companion was still groping about his grandfather's death couch. The sight of the blood seemed to have unnerved

him, and the quick intelligence which had marked all his movements up to this time, had fled. Those blotches of red on the leaves, those clots of purple jelly on the hard, dry ground had almost converted him into a woman. He was roused by his companion's voice: "Here, Tobe; here the whole damnable story is written."

Springing to the side of his friend, he grasped his arm and exclaimed, "Where?" "There!" was the reply, as he led him a few feet forward. "Don't you see where three horses have been tied to these bushes? Don't you see where they have bitten the leaves and stamped the ground? Don't you see that the middle horse had *three* shoes, and the farther horse none? while the nearest one to us was well and freshly shod? Don't you see where that hickory bush has been cut down? Now try the bludgeon in your hand, and see if it does not fit the stump."

It did fit, and Tobias Wilson rose from his knees, saying only, "It is enough." "Yes, it is enough; but there is more. Look at this track where the middle horse was mounted. Here are the iron tacks on the *inner side only.* Pull out your measure and see how it corresponds in other respects."

The same foot had made the two tracks beyond all doubt.

"We are not done yet," continued Rogers, leading Wilson to the torrent's bed, in the middle of the thicket. "Look at these three pools of water which the deep shade has prevented the sun from drying up. The lower one is still bloody. It was here they washed their bloody hands. Just over there, under that large limestone rock, you can see where they knelt down and drank themselves, and here, in this larger one, is where they watered their horses. Afterward they rode through it,—you can see where they went out and took up this hollow, which leads nowhere

but to Jim Biles's house. And look here," he added, exhibiting a yellow bandana handkerchief, "I found this on the rock by the pool where they had kneeled down to drink. It is soaked with blood—probably they spread it out on the rock to dry, and forgot it when they rode away. A man can't have all his senses about him when engaged in such a damnable 'spot of work' as this. It has no mark upon it; but when did you ever see a handkerchief like this in the pocket of any man but a Baptist?"

"I do not understand it yet," said Wilson.

"Don't understand it? What the devil is the matter with you? Why don't you understand it?"

"Because this evidence is satisfactory only as to two men, and we know that there were three. I don't understand who the third one could have been."

"Fiddle-de-dee! Why, man alive, where are your wits gone to? Didn't you tell me to-day that there were but two Baptists in ten miles of your house?"

"Yes, and that is certainly the fact."

"You needn't tell me who those two are, for I know them myself,—Jim Biles and Josh Wilkins. One of the horses hitched yonder was a gray, for he rubbed himself against the sapling and left a part of his hair upon it. That horse was shod all around. Jim Biles owns no gray horse, and lives too far away from a shop to have him regularly shod if he did. He has been riding all this year a sorrel colt, raised on the mountain, which has never had a shoe nailed on it. That well-shod gray was, therefore, not his; nor could it have been Parson Williams's, for we know that his horse had on but three shoes, and is a scuball. Josh Wilkins rides an iron-gray, and a splendid one he is. He is a conscript officer, and it is therefore necessary that he should keep his horse well shod; and besides, it is but little trouble, for he has a smith's shop at

his house. And now, if you can't trace out every link of this infernal business, you can't read the print in my sister Sophy's Bible. It has been brewing for some time, and I would have ridden over to warn you, if father had not told me he had already done so. I knew more than he did, though I never suspected Parson Ben Williams; but I see it all now. I told my father what additional particulars I had gathered, and asked him whether I should go and tell you; but he said 'no,' that you knew enough to put you on your guard, and that it was unnecessary to distress you more."

"Your father was right," interrupted Wilson. "He judged rightly, and acted, as he always does, prudently and kindly. We could not have adopted any further precautions, unless we had moved away altogether, and that grandfather never would have agreed to. Your father did perfectly right."

"Well, I believe so. But let me go on with my story. After what he said I was afraid to blab a word even to Sophy; but I kept a sharp look out, and hearing nothing new, began to think it was dying away. Last Saturday I heard that there was to be a Baptist preaching in Hog Hollow, close by Parson Williams's, and I asked Sophy to go there with me. She refused, partly I think because she don't like the Baptists, and partly because she *does like* to be always with your mother. So, as I had no one to go with me, I concluded to stay at home myself. I wish now that I had gone, for it was there that this devilish murder was concocted. I think I can see old Williams now (d——n him!) sitting in his back porch, with pious Josh Wilkins and snuffling Jim Biles, drinking peach brandy and honey, and talking about the great glory they were going to render to God and their country, by murdering a Union man, and an anti-Baptist. I know just what they said and

how they said it, and how they agreed to meet at Jim Biles's house on Wednesday, and spend the night in drinking, and praying, and perfecting their plan of murder. Jim Biles's house was fixed on, because that was the only way in which they could get into this valley, in the daytime, without attracting observation, and they must have suspected that you kept regular guard at night. Well, yesterday they rode down to this place early, and tied their horses. They did not expect, in my opinion, to find your grandfather here, but somewhere else in the field. So they crawled along the side of the mountain, outside of the fence, watching like blood-thirsty panthers for their prey. If you had been with him, they would have shot you both from their cover; but you were *not* with him, and this doubtless delayed operations for several hours. If they shot the old man, you might be near enough to come up before they could get away, and you had furnished them proof, in shooting Simmons, that in that case one, at least, of their horses would go back without a rider. It is my belief that they waited until somewhere near twelve o'clock, and then, fearing that the old man might 'turn out' at the end of the next row, and go home to feed his horse, they fell upon the plan of following after, (which was easy enough from the rustling noise made by the plow and horse in the high corn,) and pouncing upon him when he neared the woods. I do not suppose he made any cry for help, because he knew there was none at hand, and therefore they did not use the bludgeon until they found his resistance greater than they expected. They naturally supposed his horse would go back to the stable, and, if they could get the body up this hollow, it would be weeks before it was found. Thus the few individuals they might chance to meet outside of their own murdering crew, would by that time probably forget so common a circumstance,

and nothing would be left to connect them with the deed. But, thank God, we have proof enough to hang two of them, and I trust we shall get enough to hang the other."

Here Tobias Wilson broke in with a bitter, sneering laugh.

"Hang a conscript officer and two original secessionists! Hang them before a Confederate judge and jury! Oh! Thomas, Thomas, it is you who are moon-struck now!"

"You think," exclaimed his astonished companion, "that they will escape with all this evidence against them?"

"Assuredly I do."

"Then what have we taken the trouble to collect it for?"

"For my own conscience' sake. But come, the sun is below the mountain top. We must get back to the house, and feed the stock. The poor brutes must not suffer because we are in trouble. We can talk further as we walk on, and the night is all before us. I fancy that neither of us will sleep much."

Shouldering their rifles, and taking the bludgeon and the bloody handkerchief along with them, they turned their steps homeward. They passed the little stack of corn which had been made to mark the point where the murderers entered the field, but neither of them noticed it. They knew all that any further search could reveal. Each was busy with his own thoughts of the future,—so busy that they even forgot the suggestion that had been made to hold further converse on the way.

In the same silence they reached the cabins, unlocked the door of the kitchen, and deposited their rifles within. Then Tobias Wilson went to feed the stock, and Rogers set about building a fire to cook their evening meal.

Tobias Wilson had not tasted food during the day, and Rogers had eaten nothing since sunrise, (that being the breakfast hour in his father's house,) so that, notwithstand-

ing the great grief which had fallen upon them, and the troublesome nature of the thoughts which afflicted them, both did full justice to the plenteous meal prepared by their own hands.

Supper over, lights were placed in Mr. Johnson's room, and the two young men seated themselves by the fire, (which is always agreeable at night among those mountains,) and resumed their conversation.

"You must not suppose, Tom," said Wilson, "that I would have put you, or myself either, to the trouble we have this day taken, if I had entertained the remotest idea of permitting a Confederate court to sit in judgment upon my rights or my wrongs. The idea of hanging those criminals, when tried before such a tribunal, is utterly preposterous. Not a hair of their heads would be touched if an angel came down from heaven to testify against them, and an archangel to plead the cause of justice. No, my friend, you must dismiss that idea!"

"What, then, do you intend to do?"

"Kill them myself. Send them, before the ground has drank up his blood, to meet him at the bar of God's justice,—not of man's."

"In that case, Tobias Wilson, allow me to observe, that if you expect to kill all three of these men yourself, you are most damnably deceived."

"I know that there is danger and difficulty in the undertaking. I know that they will be backed by many friends, and I do not shut my eyes to the probability of losing my own life instead of taking theirs. But, nevertheless, I shall try the venture."

"That is not what I mean. I mean that I shall take a part of the job off your hands."

"You!" answered his friend with a surprised look; "you! why, what was my grandfather to you that you should im-

peril your life, it may be your soul, in this desperate adventure? No, Thomas, you must not interfere here; you have nothing to avenge!"

"If I have nothing to avenge, I have a friend from whose side I am not mean and cowardly enough to shrink in the hour of his greatest need. Nay, he is something more than a friend, for he loves my sweet sister Sophy and she loves him; and as they have both been foolish enough to tell me of their love and of their future hopes, you must submit to a little brotherly interference and accept a little brotherly assistance in a matter which I think very deeply concerns her happiness."

Tobias Wilson felt as if an ague fit had laid its icy hand upon him. He bowed his head upon his bosom, and for a moment strong traces of irresolution were visible upon those hitherto marble features. By a mighty effort he drove them away, but they soon returned, and, fixing an eager gaze upon young Rogers's face, he said:

"Tell me, Thomas, and tell me honestly for the love of Heaven, what will she say when she comes to know (for she shall hear nothing of it before the deed is done) that my hands are stained with the blood of those who deprived me of a parent?"

"What will she say? Why, I hope she will say what she did when you shot Simmons, and a brainless old woman ventured to call you a murderer in her presence. She will say that you did what a brave man and a dutiful son could not help doing, and that those who gave the act the name of murder were themselves the worst of murderers, since they were impelled by no motive but to destroy the characters of those who were a thousand times better than themselves."

"Did she say that? Did the brave girl thus defend the absent? It is like her; just like her. But I never heard it before!"

"No; for the foolish thing made me promise not to tell you. She said you would be hurt to know that rude people had spoken of you in terms of such injustice."

"Like her again! But suppose, Thomas, *my mother* should tell her that it was her duty to break off an engagement made with a man who was innocent at the time, but who had since sold his soul to Satan for revenge."

The bold, frank brother, firm as his nerves were, turned pale at the question. He hesitated, stammered, and fidgeted uneasily in his chair, but at last he caught an idea.

"That is a new view of the matter, and a puzzling one. I was foolish to overlook it. But your mother will never be such a bigoted ninny. It's a downright impossibility. Putting aside her love for you, she loves Sophy too much. It can't be. It's sheer folly to think of it!"

"*But suppose she should?*"

"Then, Tobe, if you will have it, as God is my judge, I believe Sophy would break her own heart and yours and mine rather than disobey your mother's warning voice in a matter of conscience and religion. It would kill her, but she would obey in the case you put. But why ask me? You know her better than I, or at least you ought to do it. You have given her your heart, your soul, everything you had to give, and a great deal, which, as a responsible being, you had no right to part with. She could make you turn traitor to your God in an hour. Before putting such absolute trust in a woman, you ought to have known her well enough to decide with certainty what her conduct would be in any and every contingency."

"I think I *do know her* as far as a nature like mine is capable of comprehending one as sinless as hers. I have often thought that there were degrees of purity and perfection even in heaven; that there were beings so high, so pure, so holy, that they were no more capable of being

comprehended and understood by the lesser angels, than we are capable of being comprehended and understood by the lower animals of creation. In this light your sister always appears to me. Her dutiful conduct as a daughter, her kindness as a sister, her charity as a friend, her gentleness, and the sweetness of her disposition, I understand; for these are qualities which are common to others of her sex. But these are not all which is requisite to make up the highest order of character. There is something above and beyond this. Something which I *feel* and *worship*, but cannot describe. And therefore I turned to you. I had a hope, a faint one it is true, but still *a hope*, that you, who had watched her in infancy, petted her in girlhood, and stood by her side as a strong tower of defense in the days of her blooming maidenhood, might somehow have obtained a glimpse of that knowledge which is forbidden to me. I see that I was mistaken, and I acknowledge to a kind of selfish satisfaction in making the discovery. It would have pained me, I fear, to learn that the highest and noblest, though not the loveliest attributes of her nature, were better understood by another than by myself. That *scratch*, at least, I have escaped. It may be that other and more dreaded wounds may be avoided as easily. But as we are not likely to arrive at anything satisfactory by a further discussion, let us change the topic. In a few days we may think of some form of putting the question to her or to my mother, which will enable us to find out what we wish to learn without exciting suspicion. My hand will not be fit for the work that is before it until that question is solved. If I have reason to think that she will approve—no, not that,—for I know that she will not *approve*, but that she will not utterly condemn me, I shall go forward cheerfully as to a God-appointed task. If she condemns—why, then I shall know

the worst, and may draw upon despair for the firmness and calmness necessary to the performance of my task."

The last words, solemn as they were in themselves, and still more solemn in their utterance, had, strangely enough, excited a smile of quiet satisfaction upon the lips of Thomas Rogers.

"That's it exactly, Toby! Get Sophy's opinion somehow. I don't care in what way you go about it, but get her opinion by all means. And, in order that I may hereafter enjoy some little reputation as a prophet, I will tell you beforehand what it will be. She will tell you that it is somewhere written in a certain book which sleeps every night under her pillow, 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay.' And if you go to arguing about the wickedness of allowing such men as the murderers of Robert Johnson to go at large, she will put her pretty little hand upon your arm and answer, 'We must not do evil that good may follow,' and then you will look down into the depths of those sweet blue eyes, sweeter and lovelier than any which were ever shaded by the eyelashes of an angel, and your very soul will go out from your keeping. You will kneel at her feet, call her your guardian angel, and fling vengeance to the bottomless pit. You have never kissed her, Tobe! I know it; for one day last week when you came to see your mother, I tried to tease her after you were gone, and asked if your parting kiss was a sweet one. She answered quietly, that you had never offered to kiss her, either at parting or at meeting. When you give up your proposed vengeance for her sake, and at her bidding, that will be the time to make up for what you have lost in the last three years. Kiss her, Tobe, and then kiss her again, and again. I will answer for it that, at such a time, she will submit as gently as a sucking lamb. Kiss her as often as you please, and then," he added, suddenly dropping the bantering tone

in which he had spoken, and clinching his hand, while his brow grew dark, and his eyes lurid with inward fire, "and then thank God that you have a brother-in-law, or at least a friend who expects soon to be one. Sophy shall not go down to the grave with a broken heart, nor shall you lose your revenge. Instead of taking a *part* of the contract, I take it *all.* In six weeks from this date, Ben Williams, Josh Wilkins, and Jim Biles will be rotting under ground, or Thomas Rogers, Jr., will be foresworn!"

The look of displeased annoyance with which Wilson had listened to the foregoing part of this speech, now turned to one of blank astonishment and dismay.

"Good God!" he exclaimed; "this must not, cannot, shall not be!"

"It must; it can; it shall!"

"But reflect, Tom, upon the terrible disgrace—"

"I shall reflect upon nothing," interrupted Rogers impatiently, and almost fiercely, "but the plain and palpable fact, that if I let you and Sophy alone, you will either dig untimely graves for yourselves, or you will permit three tiger cats, in human shape, to prowl over the land and gorge themselves with innocent blood. How do I know that the next victim may not be my own father? He is as obnoxious to them as Robert Johnson was."

"But why take the worst view and assume its correctness at once? It might happen that although she would oppose the deed before it was committed, yet after it was done she would forgive me, and our engagement would remain unbroken."

"Jesus, God! man, you will make me angry if you repeat such a supposition! What! Sophy take to her bosom a man whom she would regard, in such a case, as a betrayer of her love, as well as a sinner against God! I tell you that if the universe was rocking on its foundation stone,

and such a husband was presented to her, with the assurance that the *mere answer*, 'I will,' to the query of the minister, would save it from annihilation, she would clasp her hands, commend her soul to God, and wait for the shock in silence. But, pshaw! what is the use of allowing myself to get impatient! You know, Tobe," he continued coaxingly, "as well as I do, that I am speaking truth. You never could have won her love if you had not appreciated her principles. Give it up at once, like a good and brave fellow as you are. You *must* come to it."

"Never! never will I consent that any man, and you the last of all men, should encounter the peril, and incur the guilt, which by right belongs to me, and me alone. I will give up your sister's love, though in doing so I give up heaven, and go forth an avenger, all the more dangerous and merciless, because no hope is left him, either here or hereafter."

"Poor fellow! from my soul I pity you, and I would to God that I could save you from the struggle now going on in your bosom. I wish I could save my sister, too, for she also will have a fearful trial. But we are in the meshes of fate, and must each fulfill the part assigned us. If you go and tell my sister that you intend to kill those wretches, she will forbid it, *and you will obey her;* for you can no more look into her eyes and say *no* to any request of hers, than you can leap to the top of yonder mountain. If you kill them, or any one of them, without telling her your purpose beforehand, you may calculate that she will break off your engagement, *and that will kill her*, and you too, and go a long way toward killing me, for although my heart is a pretty tough one, I don't think I should ever be good for much after laying your heads in the grave. The only thing *you* can do is to let them alone."

"But will you let them alone also?"

"Not I! If I did, in the first place, you would lose your revenge, which I have no mind to balk you in. In the second place, I have a strong suspicion that if I did, Thomas Rogers, Sr., would some day before long be served just the same way your grandfather was. Therefore I shall *not* let them alone!"

"But if *my* taking the law into my own hands be so terrible, why should not the same consequences follow from *your* doing so? Will the act not be as much reprehended by your sister when committed by you, as it would be if committed by me? Will not the consequences be the same at last?"

"By no means! She does not love me as a husband but as a brother. To that tie she is not called on to say yes or no. It is one which nature has made for us. She will be shocked, mortified, and terribly hurt, I know that. But she will *forgive* me soon. So she would forgive you. The terms, however, will be *separation*. To you that would be death, to me very different; and, as I should have you here, with a husband's rights, to plead for me, I think I may calculate upon an early restoration to favor."

The absorbing nature of their conversation had prevented the young men from observing that they were in nearly total darkness. There was a kind of red glow cast by the dying embers through the room, and sitting where they were, close to the hearth, their shapes, though not their features, were visible to each other. Just as Rogers concluded the last sentence above quoted, two rifle shots rang sharply from the base of the mountain, and rolled up its sides. Springing to their feet, their rifles were in their hands in an instant, and taking opposite sides of the room they listened keenly. The dogs, which had been lying in the passage, rushed toward the outer fence with furious barking. This served them to good purpose, for it pointed out the exact

spot from which the firing had taken place. Directly they heard a yelping among the dogs, which showed that one of them had been stricken, most likely with a stone. Wilson was satisfied that the attention of those who had fired the shots would be occupied for several minutes by the dogs, and, walking over to Rogers, he said:

"Let us leave here. They are too busy with the dogs, and it is too dark for them to see us. We will get out where we may have a fair chance, or rather where all the chances will be in our favor, since we know their whereabouts and they will know nothing of ours."

In the daytime the more prudent course would have been to remain within the shelter of the cabins, but this was reversed at night. Then, no matter whether they wished to seek safety by flight from overpowering odds, or prepare to do battle with equal, or nearly equal numbers, it was the dictate of prudence to get into the open air as speedily as possible. Tobias Wilson and his grandfather had often discussed this point, and weighing well every possible contingency, had deliberately planned the mode of defense to be adopted in each separate case.

"We must not separate, Tom," whispered Wilson, as leaving the house by a side door, they moved stealthily but swiftly toward an angle of the fence which commanded both the cabins and the stables. "Keep close to me, or we may get to shooting each other in the dark."

The noise made by the dogs had changed a little, and was now nearer the house, showing that the assailants, whoever they were, had no idea of flight, but were cautiously approaching. About the same time the lights gleaming through the cracks in his grandfather's room attracted the attention of Wilson.

"We have had a narrow escape, Tom, and those lights have probably saved our lives," whispered he to his com-

panion. "On the other side of the house there is a window, which I left open when we lighted the candles. On the slope of the mountain from which the firing came, everything in that room would be visible through the open window. They have seen the dead body on the bed, and supposing that he was merely asleep, have fired at it. What surprises them now, and makes them approach so cautiously, is that they hear no outcry from my mother. In a short time they will suppose she is absent, and will approach more boldly. Now let us move our position to where we can command the window. We will get a shot before long, depend on it."

As they moved around the fence to a point within twenty yards of the open window, Wilson made his comrade observe every obstruction or inequality in the path, and pointed out the place where a branch pathway led across the little stream to the road.

"By this path," he said, still speaking in whispers, "it is not more than fifteen yards to the *spring branch.* If they have tied their horses about the stable, as I think they have, for the greater convenience of carrying off ours, they must ride over a hundred yards before they can reach this point, and we shall have no trouble in intercepting their retreat."

They had now reached a part of the fence which was built upon a small ledge of rocks, some three feet high. By sitting down behind this ledge, they had before them an impenetrable natural breastwork, just high enough to enable them to rest their pieces on the lower rails of the fence. They placed themselves, as before, so as to be able to fire from adjoining panels of the fence. One of the dogs had run yelping away, apparently badly hurt; the other still kept up a continuous barking, but was "fighting shy." Pretty soon a rock or some other missile struck him, and he too sought protection under the cabin. All this had not occupied

more than three or four minutes, and the two watchers drew their breath hard, for they knew the time for action was at hand. They were in full view of the window, from which a strong light was calmly streaming. Directly a dark object could be discerned moving on the outer edge of the light. Then another. They were evidently puzzled, and came on slowly and cautiously. Taking a few steps farther forward, they halted and held a brief consultation, then advanced directly to the window. One of them laid his hand upon the sill, and looked in. Now was the time. Two rifle shots, in quick succession, rang upon the still night air. One of the marauders fell heavily to the ground; the other discharged his gun in the direction of the ambushed party, and then bounded toward the stable.

"Quick!" said Wilson. "Load quick, Tom; we shall catch him at the spring branch."

To men who had been accustomed to the use of the rifle from the time they were able to raise it to their shoulders, and who in their pursuit of game, and in encounters with the bears and panthers which infested that wild region, had often found celerity of loading essential to the preservation of life itself, this was an operation which occupied scarcely a moment of time. Besides, on the present occasion, they had anticipated its probable necessity, and everything was in readiness. Their guns were loaded, and they were within ten feet of the point Wilson had designated, before they heard the clatter of a horse's feet at full speed coming down the road. "Let him pass," said Wilson, "before you fire. The road here runs nearly straight for forty or fifty yards. We can hardly miss him if we fire right down it."

On came the horseman at reckless speed. He passed unconsciously within a few feet of his ambushed foes. Again the guns were raised to their shoulders, and again

the quick, sharp, deadly report of the Kentucky rifle echoed in the valley and rolled upwards along the mountain side. For a few bounds the rider kept his seat, then reeled in the saddle, dropped the bridle, clutched at the mane of his horse, missed it, and fell heavily to the ground.

"I think," said Rogers, reloading his gun, "that we have done for them both; though this fellow isn't dead yet. I hear him groaning. Go to the house, Tobe; I guess you will find that other fellow's horse hitched to the fence. Bring him down, for I have no idea of toting yonder carrion on my shoulders. In the mean time I'll just walk up and ask him what hurt him."

Thomas Rogers spoke lightly and recklessly, but he did not act in the same manner. He crossed the spring branch, and proceeded cautiously on the opposite side from the road. The banks were almost everywhere high and steep, and he had no difficulty in keeping pretty well under cover. He thought the fallen man might be only slightly wounded, and if so he would seek to revenge himself for the injury he had received upon the first one who approached him. He knew that these marauders always carried their pistols belted about the person, which made it improbable that it would be lost in falling. When immediately opposite the spot from which the groans proceeded, he leaped over the narrow branch, and, sheltering himself by the high bank, said in an ordinary tone of voice:

"Who are you, and what's the matter?"

"Water!" gasped the wounded man; "for God's sake give me water!"

"But who are you?"

"James Miller, Sergeant —th Tennessee Cavalry. Water! water! Will you let me die of thirst?"

Satisfied that no danger was to be apprehended, Rogers now leaped over the bank and approached him, saying as he did so:

"Give me your cap."

The wounded man raised his hand toward his head, but let it fall with a cry of pain.

"I can't; take it, and be quick."

Rogers attempted to do so, but it was fastened under the chin to prevent it from falling off, either in flight or pursuit.

Kneeling down to unloose it, he bethought him of the pistol, and instantly laid his hand upon it.

"I'll just appropriate this article first. You may be a very good fellow, but I have heard of men who were repaid with a bullet through the brains for just such services as I am about to render you."

The wounded man made no reply. The water was brought, and he drank greedily. Then drawing a long sigh, he murmured, "Oh! how sweet!" It was probably the first time in years that pure element would not have been exchanged by him for a more fiery liquid. "Please give me some more." It had been many a day since that word "please" had passed his lips; and never before to a Union man and a civilian. Another capful was brought, and greedily swallowed. By this time Tobias Wilson had come up with the horse.

"Where are you hurt?" he asked.

"My leg is broken and my shoulder is badly hurt; but I do not know whether it was from a bullet or by the fall."

"Can you ride, with one of us to walk by and hold you on?"

"I'm afraid not; but if you will lift me up, I'll try."

He was lifted on the horse's back, and carried to the house with but little trouble. One of the candles was brought from Mr. Johnson's room, and the wounded man deposited in the kitchen. They then went out and brought in the body which was lying under the window. He was

dead. While they were straightening and composing his limbs on the floor, and examining the wounds which had sent him to his long account, the wounded prisoner, who was also lying on a blanket in another part of the room, considerably strengthened and refreshed by a hearty draught of brandy from a flask in his haversack, indulged himself in a muttered commentary on all he saw and heard. His first exclamation after the body was brought in was:

"He's as dead as a door nail."

As the examination progressed, his comments were muttered from time to time somewhat in the following strain:

"Hit in the head, and shot through under the left arm! He never kicked; he couldn't have felt it, that's some comfort. Poor Bob! he was as true a comrade as ever went out foraging, and now he's gone; and Tom Simmons before him, and I'm laid up to dry. It'll be six months before I can ride a horse again, even if these fellows don't hang me, or turn me over to them as will. I wonder who it was we shot at in t'other room! They seem to be mighty easy about him, and yet I'll bet my revolver to a one dollar Con-fed note, that he's got two three-quarter ounce balls through him. They've not said a word about him, and I'm thinking it would'nt be exactly prudent for me to broach the subject."

By this time Bob Jenkins (for it was he) had been decently laid out on the floor, and a counterpane spread over him. The two friends now approached the prisoner.

"Let us see what we can do for you, sir," said Rogers; "for although you deserve to have been left like a dog on the road, we must not let you suffer any more than we can help."

"You may begin with this," he replied, coolly enough, though he must have been suffering greatly, and pointing at the same time to his left leg.

A straw mattress was taken from under the bed, his clothes were stripped off, and he was laid upon it. A basin of water and some towels were placed on the floor. Two other candles were lighted and set down, one on each side of him. Rogers washed away the clotted blood as carefully as if tending a friend. He saw at once that the bone was badly shattered, about three inches below the knee.

"We can do nothing here, Tobe, but bind it up and wait for Dr. Griffin to-morrow. This must have been my ball. Yours is not large enough to have shattered this bone so effectually."

"True enough," said Wilson, stooping down and examining the wounded limb. "How are we to bind it up? It is an awkward place to bandage."

"I saw Dr. Griffin do up a fracture of this sort once, and I think I can manage it after a fashion, if you happen to have such a thing as a pasteboard in the house."

"Yes, there is. My mother bought one not long ago to make a sun-bonnet, but did not use it, thinking her old one would last through the summer."*

"Then get it. Get also an old sheet to make a bandage."

When the pasteboard and sheet were produced, Rogers directed his friend to cut off two wide slips of the pasteboard, about eight inches in length, so as to extend above and below the knee, while he himself tore off, and made a

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* It is very common in the mountains, where people cannot go to a store for every little thing they need, to keep always on hand articles of this sort, for household use. The farmers, too, will often purchase and put away articles they do not expect to use for months. Thus many things of convenience or necessity are frequently to be found in cabins where no one would look for them,—a circumstance which the reader may have occasion to notice several times in these pages.

roll of bandage of sufficient length. Beginning at the toe, he bandaged the foot and ankle up to the place to which he wished the pasteboard to extend. Then applying the pasteboard on each side of the fractured limb, he continued his bandaging process until it extended high enough above the knee to render the joint immovable, remarking as he did so:

"It is like enough that I may have more of this sort of work to do, and I may as well get my hand in."

The other wound was through the right shoulder, where bandaging was out of the question; but he managed to fasten a bat of cotton tolerably securely on the orifice where the ball entered, and another where it came out. Then arranging his patient as comfortably as possible on a straw mattress, he proposed to Wilson that they should get some wood and make a fire.

"This fellow," he said, "has lost blood enough to make him feel a little chilly, and I want to question him when he is quite at his ease. I suppose there is no further danger of being shot at to-night. At all events, we can make all safe by closing doors and windows. It cannot now be very far from daylight."

A cheerful fire was soon made, and Rogers, seating himself with the air of a Supreme Court Judge, began his examination.

"I think I know you, Mr. Sergeant Miller."

"If you live in these parts, it's like enough; though I don't remember you. I was raised in seven miles of here."

"Your father is a Baptist?"

"Yes, sir; do you know him?"

"No; but I have heard of him as one of Parson Ben Williams's flock of lambs. He is a special pet of the Parson's, I believe,—one of the chosen vessels."

"Not by a darned sight. Dad is a Union man, and old

Ben thinks that's the next worst thing to bein' a Methodist. Dad belongs to his church; but there's no love lost between them, 'specially when they gits on politics."

"Ah! then how came you in the Confederate army?"

"That's easy told; but if you mean to ax me many questions, you must give me some more brandy. I'm mighty weak."

The flask and a cup of water were handed him.

"Never mind the water. I never spiles good liquor by weakening it, and this is good. It come from Gen. Hardee's own jug." He took a drink of raw spirit from the flask, and laid it on the bed beside him.

"Jest leave this here, so I can take a sip as I needs it, and then drive on with your questions,—I'm ready."

"I asked you how it happened that you, the son of a Union man, (and one who must be a true one, to have stood out against his church,) should be in the Confederate army."

"'Cause dad never took no papers but Parson Graves's Baptist paper at Nashville, and *hit* was so keen to save our souls, *hit* forgot to tell us of danger to our bodies."

"I am afraid I don't understand you. What do you mean?"

"Well, you see, Parson Graves never gived us no information about the Conscript Act of Congress, and as I had never *heered* anything about it, I was glad when mammy axed me to take a meal bag full of bacon over to Winchester, where we heerd the soldiers would swap sugar for it. Well, I got there and made the swap,—a pretty good one as I thought, for we had a plenty of meat, and was *afeered* the soldiers would find it out and take it from us, as dad was suspected of being disloyal to the Confederacy. After that I went to buy two quart bottles of brandy for dad, which he had charged me partickler to get good. Old

Ben Grimes showed me a sutler's store where he said I could get the best 'old peach' in the State. The store was full of people buying everything they could see. When I axed the feller for the 'old peach,' he looked as black as thunder, and said he'd give me to understand he was a law-abiding man, and if I wanted to buy forbidden things I must go somewhere else." (Here Sergeant Miller took a sip from his flask.) "I went out mad as a hornet at old Ben Grimes for fooling me in such a fashion, and when I found him I began to curse him black and blue. At first he didn't know what was the matter, but when he understood the thing, instead of trying to knock me down he burst out laughing. 'Why, you great goose,' he said, 'what else could you expect when you axed for 'old peach' with a store full of people? Come with me. I'll fix it, for I likes your daddy, and I'm sorter dry myself.' When the feller seed me come back with old Grimes he understood it all in a minute. 'Well, my young one,' he said mighty perlite, 'what will you have?' Old Grimes put in, 'He wants some doctor's stuff, Mr. Murray, his mammy's got the di-ar-ree, and them d——d Yankees has busted all the 'pothecary shops. Aint you got something that'll do the old ooman good?' 'Of course I has. It's a mighty common complaint among the soldiers, and I always makes it a pint to have a good lot on hand. But it aint here; wait a minit. Tom will be in directly to tend the store, and I'll go to the warehouse with you.' Tom was not far off. I found out afterwards that he never was on such occasions. Throwing the bag with the bottles on my shoulder, me and Murray and Grimes went over to what had been the smoke-house of the old tavern. He opened the door, and following us in locked it on the inside. We had a heap of chat, and took several drinks round before I would agree to give his price, (four dollars a quart.)

Finally, he agreed to fling in a pint flask, and fill it for my own private use. But he charged me partickler never to tell no one how cheap he had let me have it. I know'd he was a swindling me, but I didn't let on. The fact is, I was bought up by that pint flask and *the within*. I had never had so much liquor before in my life. Murray locked his door and went off to the store, but old Ben Grimes stuck to me like a leech. I thought he wanted some of my liquor, and instead of letting him keep me in town, I hurried off quicker than I meant to do. He had sent a runner for a conscript officer, and was trying to keep me 'till he come. But he didn't. I saw he was nearly crazy to keep me in town, and I was determined not to be kept; not that I suspected him of having anything to do with conscription, for I didn't know the meaning of the word, but I suspected him of wanting to drink my liquor. So I mounted, and rode off in a trot. When I got home, dad and the old woman were so well pleased with my sugar trade, that they overlooked the liquor business, especially as the brandy was really very good, and dad was furnished with an excuse for shortening my allowance. It was late, and by the time me and the old man had fed the stock, the gals and my little brothers come in from work. I was the oldest of the family. The three next to me were girls and the other two boys. I was then just twenty. All the heavy work was done by dad and me. The old woman cooked, and on washing days my oldest sister helped her. Besides, she always came to the house a little earlier than the others in the evening, to milk, bringing my younger brother with her to help keep off the calves, while she milked the cows. We were all healthy and willing to work, and were getting along in the world contentedly and well. We had prayers every night, and if they did me no good at the time or since, it was not dad's fault. I believe

that I should have been a good, sober, industrious man, as dad is. He loves his dram, and takes it regular in his family; but he is honest, hardworking, and religious, and never lets the liquor git ahead of him. I believe I should have been too, if this d——d war hadn't come along, busting up everything, making men who were tolerably well off, poor, and poor men, beggars; making honest men, thieves, and kind-hearted human beings, blood-thirsty panthers. I wish the men who brought it on were in the bottom of hell, and Jeff. Davis the lowest of the lot." (After this outburst he took another sip from the flask, and resumed.) "But to go on with my story. The children came in and dad made a sweetened dram for them all round, when we sat down to supper in the best kind of humor. The little ones were still eating, and the old woman was scolding them and helping them by turns, when we heard the tramp of horses' feet, and the jingle of cavalry spurs and sabres. It was an unwelcome sound, but none of us had the least idea of what it portended. It was a conscript officer with a party of five, a corporal and four privates. Old Ben Grimes had put them on my track. They had a led horse which they had *pressed* on the way, and I was hurried off with the corporal and two men, while the officer with two others remained to take supper. Dad seized the chance and pleaded, and pleaded in vain. He told him our fix,—that there was no one but me capable of doing a good day's work. He pointed to the helpless children huddled in a corner, to his own gray hairs, and told him that they must come to want if I was taken away from them; but it did no good. The d——d hypocrite pretended to be affected even to tears, but his duty was imperative, he had no discretion. What could he do? The Government was just at this time in the greatest need of men, and Gen. Bragg would take no excuse for any lax

enforcement of the conscript law. He had private advices from Richmond, which was carefully kept out of the papers, and only entrusted to confidential officers like himself, that Gen. Lee was preparing to strike a blow that would astonish the world. In three months Washington would be ours, and the war over. His son, that is me, would then come back to him covered with glory, and all the girls in the county would be envying my sisters. To all this, got by heart, and repeated a hundred times before, dad made no reply. He was not fooled in the least, but he saw it was useless and said nothing. That's the way, sir, I came to be in the Confederate army."*

"And did you stay in that army willingly after such treatment as you have described?"

"Surely not! I was outrageous at first. I beat old Ben Grimes until every bone in his body was sore. This brought on punishment, and then I was closely watched. I was sent away to East Tennessee and drafted into a cavalry regiment. By degrees I began to like my associates. I found that most of them were fellow-victims. Then there was attraction in the constant excitement; the license which is always allowed to the cavalry soldier in the Confederacy, had its charms. From being only endurable, it became pleasant, and I remained from choice where I had been placed by force. I would have deserted any hour of the first two months and joined the Yankees. I have had hundreds of chances since, but I did not go nor think of going. I don't know how it may be hereafter, for I am likely to have a long time for reflection, and I have never

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* The main facts here stated are literally true. Hundreds of just such cases may be easily gathered up. Nay more, *every county* in the South has its list of victims to the conscription, and there is *not one* in which cases more infamous than this may not be found.

yet knowed reflection to do the Confederate cause any good."

"You are right in that, at least," said Rogers; "but tell me, did your family suffer, as you expected, for the want of your assistance?"

"No! But that was no fault of the Confederacy or its officers. They did nothing to avert the suffering which dad and I looked for in the family. But I came back from East Tennessee comparatively rich. I had my pockets full of Confederate money. I had over two hundred dollars in State bank notes, and nearly fifty dollars in gold. I gave it all to dad, except about a hundred dollars in Con-fed. *But I didn't tell him how I got it.* I told him to use the Con-fed money in hiring help, but to save the State money and the gold, and never spend it under any circumstances. I said I wanted the gold for a wedding gift for my youngest sister, Lilly, and the State money to educate the boys whenever a time came in this country that a school could be opened. When I came back from Gen. Bragg's raid into Kentucky, I brought a hundred and eighty-two and a half dollars in gold, five hundred dollars in greenbacks, fifty dollars in Kentucky, and seventy-five dollars in Tennessee bank notes. Besides five thousand dollars in Confed, which I gave to dad, and had more than enough to do me besides. I told him to keep it all safe for various uses which I pretended I wanted to put it to hereafter, except the Con-fed, which he could use as he pleased. But, in truth, I only wanted to be certain that he and the wimen folks and little ones had a good 'nest egg,' if I should happen to get knocked in the head, or meet with some such accident as this of to-night. It was more money than he had ever seed, and I had some trouble to make him believe that I came by it honestly. But he did give in, and put away the funds for safe keeping, and pocketed the Con-fed, when,

if he had known the truth, he would have burned it before my face, and driven me from his doors."

"What is the truth, pray? That is, if you have no objection to telling me. I suppose I know, but I had rather hear it from your own lips."

"I should have objected yesterday. But a man feels very different with a broken leg and a bullet through his shoulder to what he does when in strong health, and mounted on a splendid horse. I feel sorter as if it would be a relief to me to tell. I got every dollar of that money, and a good deal more which I now have, and a lot which is quilted in my saddle, by stealing and robbing. Stealing money when I could, and when I couldn't find money, taking watches, horses, mules, and everything else that would sell. I sold one horse I stole in Kentucky for two thousand dollars, one-half in Con-fed and the other half in State money."

"You seem to have made your conscription profitable in the money line at least."

"Yes! but I lost character, honor, humanity itself. I'm a d—n—d brute! Leastways I would be, if I did not sort of reconcile the thing to my conscience by thinking that the old man and the old woman would have been in the poor-house, and the children, God knows where, but for my robberies!"

"That is something to human view, but not much, I am afraid, in the eye of Heaven. But tell me, did your comrades generally prosper as you did?"

"No, sir-ee! They did as much robbing it may be, some of them more; for the cavalry generally gits all that is going in that way; but they gambled, loaned money to needy acquaintances in the infantry, and wasted it on worthless women whenever they had a chance. I saved all. I had one object before me, and I kept it always in mind. I

was determined that if I went to the devil headforemost, my brothers and sisters should not be compelled to follow after me by hunger. They are safe now, and that's a comfort anyhow!"

"Mr. Miller," said Rogers, "your story is an interesting one, and I must hear more of it another time. But there is a more pressing matter about which I should first like to have some information. Be good enough to tell us what brought you here, and why you sought to murder people who had never harmed you, and were too poor to excite your cupidity? Did you have accomplices or instigators?"

"No; none but the dead. We entered this valley by accident. I found there was plenty of eatables for man and horse. I thought, too, that it might some day prove a place of safety if we should be hard pressed by Yankee cavalry, and I made up my mind that it should be my halting-place when I was in this neighborhood. I never meant that another thing, not so much as a pewter spoon, should be taken from the family, except just what we and our horses might eat. It is true that Tom Simmons threatened more than once to capture the old man's gray horse, but I didn't mean to let him. I did not oppose him right out, for it wasn't necessary to quarrel with him about a thing he might never have a chance to try. But I just made up my mind that, if he ever put a halter on that horse's head, I'd take it off; and he'd been in my company too long to make any fuss about my *proceedins*, when he knowed I was in earnest. I could see plain enough that it was to my interest to make a friend of the old fellow what lives here, and I meant to do it if I could fix it up any way at all."

"He does not live here now," interrupted Wilson, in a voice hoarse with emotion; "he is dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed Miller, with real feeling, trying to

turn over on his straw mattress. "Dead! and that, I suppose, is some of my work. That's another account added to the list I've got to settle hereafter!"

"You did not hurt him. He was murdered the day before."

"Thank God for that! Not for his being murdered, but that I did not do it. Two days ago I should only have thought of cursing myself and Jenkins for the idiotic folly of taking a corpse for a sleeping man; but some of my old feelings are coming back on me, and I'm not sure I'm sorry it happened as it has."

"I have strong hopes," said Rogers, "that it will turn out to be much the best thing that could have happened to you. But go on with *your* story. You shall hear *his* before long."

Miller took another and a larger drink of the brandy, for he had lost much blood, and was very weak. He then resumed.

"I wanted to make a friend of Mr. Johnson because I intended to stay about home as close as possible, as long as any of our boys were in the neighborhood; for I knowed they were none too good to rob *my* dad, if they could do it without my finding them out. I wanted to watch them at any rate, and as it was certain the Yankee cavalry would soon be swarming over the country, I judged it best to have a good hiding-place away from home. Well, we was gone some weeks, and in the mean time somebody warned the old man against us. When we came back we found the house locked up, and him, and another feller that was with him, gave us to understand that if we got any dinner here we'd have to fight for it. I began a palaver with him, intending, after making a show to satisfy the boys, to retreat and come back some other time when he was in a better humor. I've thought since that if I'd had the sense of a cat I'd have

gone off at once. But I didn't have time to study it over then. The first thing I knowed, Simmons blazed away at somebody who was in this here room, and then his cussed horse-stealing habits made him try to mount the gray and gallop off. He hadn't got twenty yards before a bullet overtook him. He had rid his last time on horseback."

"It was I who fired that shot," said Wilson.

A shade darkened the brow of Miller, but it was only of momentary duration. When it had passed away, he continued.

"You fired it! and I owe you too this hole in my shoulder, and Bob Jenkins there, the worse hole in his head. There was a time when it would not have been prudent to tell me this; but I hope that is over. But I can't tell," he added, shaking his head sadly; "I don't know rightly how strong a hold the Devil has got upon me *yit.*"

After another sip of the brandy, he continued his narrative.

"We made terms with the garrison, and carried Tom Simmons to the thicket just outside of the gap. We would have buried him there, but we had no tools, so we waited until dark, and took him to the house of a sure friend. We dug a hole for him behind the stable, and there he is now.

"I had no chance for friendship with Mr. Johnson after that day's work. But I still wanted a hiding-place to retreat to in case of need, and I determined to have it. I concocted a story of his murdering Simmons which I thought might drive him from the neighborhood, but it didn't. I *tried on* several other schemes. They failed to frighten him off, if he ever heard of them, which is doubtful, and then I came here to settle the matter myself, after the usual fashion of Gen. Wheeler's cavalry, or partisan rangers, as Jeff. Davis calls them. You know the rest."

The exhausted man took another sip of brandy, and then lay perfectly still and motionless. The candles paled before the broad light of day. The two young men rose and left the house to perform the necessary duty of feeding their horses. When they returned with the materials for an early breakfast, as a preparation for the labors of the day, Sergeant Miller was sleeping as soundly as a tired infant, with its dimpled cheeks pillowed on its mother's breast.

CHAPTER VI.

That morning a small but sincere party of mourners might have been seen struggling up the steep mountain path which led to the dwelling of the late Robert Johnson. It consisted of Mrs. Wilson, Mr. Rogers, and his daughter Sophy, the surgeon, Dr. Griffin, and the minister, Parson King. The surgeon and the minister rode a little in advance, and occasionally exchanged a word or two in low and solemn tones. The remainder of the party followed in silence and in tears. When they first came in sight of "the cabins," a violent sob burst from Mrs. Wilson, which was echoed by her fair young companion, but no exclamation, no word, was uttered by either.

The young men had passed the morning in making a rude coffin of planks, in which they placed the body of Mr. Johnson, leaving it, however, uncovered. In the little garden they dug a grave, and made all the necessary preparations for his burial. The same sad offices were then performed for Bob Jenkins, except that his coffin was nailed up at once, and his grave was dug some distance off. These tasks had not long been finished when they saw the party of mourners descending the mountain side. Locking up the kitchen door, in which the wounded prisoner was lying by the coffin of his dead comrade, the two friends walked out to the bars which gave admittance to the yard. Mrs. Wilson and Sophy Rogers were gently lifted from their horses, and led in silence to the chamber of the dead, where they instantly threw themselves upon their knees by

the side of the coffin, and gave vent to a flood of tears. Thomas Rogers, in the mean time, touched his father's arm, and leading him outside of the house, related briefly the night's adventures. Mr. Rogers, Sr., was amazed. He had regarded it as a certain thing, and had so spoken of it to several of his acquaintances, that Robert Johnson had been murdered by the soldiers who had twice called at his house for no good purpose, and were at last only driven off by the slaughter of one of their number. It was now plain that they were innocent of his death in fact, however guilty in intention. Who then could have done the bloody deed? He started as if stung by an adder, when his son, in answer to his look of eager inquiry, said in a stern whisper:

"Parson Williams, Josh Wilkins, and Jim Biles are the murderers."

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "Impossible! I do not love either one of the three, but they are not so wicked as that."

"So I thought," answered his son, "and so I said; but we have proofs that, before an honest judge and jury, would hang a saint. We will talk over all that, however, another time. The matter which presses most is, how are we to get the 'women folks' away from here without letting them know that there are *two* dead bodies instead of one under that roof, and another who may be, for all I know, in a fair way to join them. Wait a moment until I call Tobe; we will then walk off a short distance together and consult."

Tobias Wilson was soon brought from the house, and the three men, moving out of hearing, seated themselves on a ledge of rocks to confer with each other as to the best course to be pursued under the difficult circumstances in which they were placed.

"Thomas and I thought, Mr. Rogers," said Wilson, "that after grandfather was buried, we would get mother and Miss Sophy to their horses at once, without returning to the house, that you and Parson King could ride on with them, while we kept Dr. Griffin with us upon some pretext or other, and when they were gone, he could examine the wounded man, while Thomas and I buried the dead one down in that hollow where the grave will not attract attention."

Mr. Rogers listened attentively to his young friend, and thought deeply before he replied. At length he said:

"It won't do, boys! It won't do! Your mother, Tobias, will never leave here without going through the house. She said this morning that she had some arrangements to make, after the funeral, for your comfort, and even spoke of remaining here all night. I can see nothing for it but to go and tell those here present all that has occurred, and I am not sure but that it is the best policy. It will serve to distract your mother's mind somewhat, from thinking of her father, and thus lessen her grief. It will relieve her too from a part of the anxiety she would feel on your account, if you remained here to-night without giving her a good reason for it. You must tell her, and the best way is to make no secret of it. Go into the house and tell her at once in the presence of our friends."

It was apparent from Thomas's countenance that he coincided with his father. Wilson was staggered. He felt that the advice was good, but he had an unconquerable repugnance to telling, in the presence of her he loved, a story of violence and blood in which he had himself so large a share.

"I—I would rather not," he stammered; "won't you, Mr. Rogers, be so good as to tell it for me?"

"No, silly boy. I do not know the facts. Thomas has

only given me an imperfect outline. Why should you hesitate? You have done nothing to be ashamed of."

"I don't think I could get through with it, sir. I—"

"Never mind," interrupted Thomas Rogers; "come on to the house, I will tell it myself."

When they returned they found Mrs. Wilson still in tears, but much calmer. The minister of religion had been reminding her of the sinfulness of unmeasured grief, and the ingratitude of thus reproaching the Almighty for what He permitted to be done. "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." The words found an echo in her heart, and the sorrow which, without religion, would have maddened her, became only a gentle chastening in the presence of that heaven-born ejaculation. If grief was not banished from her bosom, it was softened and subdued, and there was no longer danger of any violent outbreak. Thomas Rogers broke the silence which followed their entrance, in a low but distinctly audible voice:

"I am afraid, doctor, that in mourning for the dead, Tobias and I have forgotten the duties of humanity. There is a wounded man in the next room who much needs your help."

"*A wounded man!*" exclaimed the doctor. And all eyes were turned upon the speaker as if to read in his countenance the meaning of his strange words.

"Yes! A badly wounded man."

He then went over rapidly, but distinctly and clearly, the events of the preceding night, omitting only the subject of the conversation between Wilson and himself, and their suspicions of the persons who really murdered the old man now lying in his coffin before them. When the story ended, the doctor, followed by the gentlemen present, walked into the kitchen to minister to the hurts of Sergeant Miller, while Mrs. Wilson and Sophy went into the garden to gather

some of the few flowers blooming there to decorate the grave of her parent. They had not plucked more than a dozen, when Mrs. Wilson clasped her hand on her heart, and exclaimed:

"I must—I must—I must tell some one, or my heart will break. Sophy, my love, come here. Did you notice Tobias when your brother said, that although he at first suspected these bad men of murdering my father, he was now satisfied the deed was done by some one nearer home, and he hoped they would soon be overtaken by a retribution swifter than the law."

"No, dear madam, I think I was too much frightened, thinking of the danger they had escaped, to notice anything."

"*I did*, Sophy. I watched him closely; and the glance of his eye brought a horrid fear upon me. He spoke some words yesterday which disturbed me greatly; but to-day he looked as if the fiend already had possession of him. Spare me, oh Lord! in mercy spare me this last and deadly blow!"

"What do you mean, Mrs. Wilson?" asked the trembling and now thoroughly frightened girl. "What cause is there for this new anxiety? In mercy's name, what do you fear?"

"*Revenge*, my child. That black and deadly sin which has sent so many souls to perdition, and is yet so sweet that the best of earth's children are never safe from the danger of its indulgence."

"Revenge! I do not think I know exactly what you mean."

"I mean that Tobias Wilson has forgotten the teachings of him who is now gone, and is contemplating a bloody and fearful vengeance upon those who murdered his grandfather."

Trembling like an aspen, and turning as white as the lily before the sun has kissed the dew from its leaves, the young girl caught her companion's arm and almost shrieked:

"Oh! Mrs. Wilson, do not say so. Do not believe that one so gentle and good can dream of throwing away his soul for the gratification of a fierce and wicked passion. It cannot—cannot be."

"Alas! I cannot be deceived. If the Evil One is not now rioting in his bosom, I do not know the face of my own child."

"Then save him, madam. Oh! save him from this horrid fate."

"I shall try, Sophy, for it is my duty. I shall weary Heaven with prayers,—but I have no hope. Father and son both gone! The one will soon be in the grave; the other—worse. Oh! God, strengthen me to say, 'Thy will, not mine, be done.'"

"*I will save him!*" exclaimed Sophy Rogers, with sudden vehemence, while a rosy tinge of heavenly beauty spread over her cheeks, and her eyes brightened with a gleam of light as holy and as pure as that of the star which shed its radiance o'er the cradle of the infant Redeemer. The shadows of the mountain rested upon the spot where she stood; she had lifted the straw bonnet from her head, and the spirit of the summer wind, as it swept through her dark chestnut curls, uttered a mournful sigh because it could not linger there forever. Hers was a shape and form upon which Nature had lavished all its choicest gifts, and then the angel, the archangel, and the cherubim had come, one after another, to touch it with their heavenly hands, adding a line of beauty here, a glow of softness there, and spreading everywhere in every lineament, and in every limb, a mingled grace and sweetness, of which no poet had ever dreamed, and to which no painter's aspirations had ever

been lifted up. But it was not the mere perfection of form and of feature which extorted the wondering admiration of the beholder. It was not even that higher loveliness of *expression* which springs from the union of intellect with the exact and perfect chiseling of the statuary. It was something more lofty and more holy—more sublime, and yet more gentle and sweet. *It was* RELIGION. That splendid creature; that being of unapproached and unapproachable loveliness had contemplated the Godhead so often, and with such deep fervor, that a portion of its glories had descended and settled upon her.

"*I will save him!*" repeated the young and sinless enthusiast: "no matter what it costs, I will save him."

"Thank you, dear Sophy, for your good-will; but if he will not hearken to the voice of the mother who bore him, there is little chance of his listening to yours, sweet and musical as it is."

"Let me try at any rate, madam. Do let me try!"

"Let you try! yes, surely; and my prayers and thanks shall go with your efforts. That boy is very dear to me."

"And to me too," answered Sophy with a blushing cheek, but a frank unembarrassed tone.

Mrs. Wilson wondered, but said nothing. They walked back to the house in silence. The dressing of the wounded man's hurts was completed, and Mr. Rogers, Sr., suggested that it was time to fasten down the coffin-lid, preparatory to depositing the body of Robert Johnson in its last resting-place.

Tobias Wilson addressed Dr. Griffin:

"I sent for you, doctor, for the purpose of getting you to examine the wounds which killed my grandfather. Since then we have collected a mass of testimony which makes it superfluous. Still, as you are here, I think the examination may as well be made."

"It will be more satisfactory, I think," replied the doctor; "if it proves nothing *you* do not know, it may prove something to others."

The body was removed from the coffin, and the ladies left the room; kindly going in to say some words of sympathy to Miller, and inquire whether anything could be done to make his situation more comfortable.

The two wounds inflicted on the corpse by Miller and Jenkins were not examined by Dr. Griffin. The other two were of unequal size, one very large, larger than would have been made by a musket bullet; it had been discharged from a smooth-bore gun. Dr. Griffin thought it was a shot-gun, as he knew of no other fire-arm which would carry such a ball. Tobias Wilson and Thomas Rogers exchanged glances of intelligence, but said nothing. The doctor's task was ended. The body was replaced in the coffin, the lid was nailed down, and all were ready to move on to the grave, when Sophy Rogers, with a burning cheek, but a firm and steady step, and an eye beaming with conscious rectitude, walked over to Tobias Wilson, and, taking him by the hand, led him to her father.

"Father," she said in a voice so little tremulous that no one noticed it but her brother; "father, before we leave this room I have a secret to tell you and a favor to ask."

"A secret, my daughter! I thought I knew all of yours long ago."

"You did, indeed, with this one exception. It is the first I ever had from you; I hope it will be the last. A little more than two years ago this young man told me that he loved me, and asked me to promise that I would some day be his wife. I was only a little girl then, and he nothing more than a boy. It was folly for us to think of marrying then, and I would not bind myself by a promise which I might some day have good cause to break. But

he had won my little heart, and before we parted he made me confess as much. He did not gain much by that, though, for I was ashamed of it as soon as the word was out of my mouth. I hid my face with both my hands and began to cry. He tried to soothe me, but I *could not* stop crying for some time, as foolish as I knew it to be. When my tears at last ceased to flow, I made him promise that he would never speak to me again of love or marriage until he was twenty-one years of age. Last spring, the very day he was twenty-one, he rode over to tell me of it, and to offer me again his hand in marriage. He little thought that I knew his age that day as well as he did, and had looked forward to its coming as often and thought of it as anxiously as he had. It ended by my promising to become his wife in twelve months, if you and Mrs. Wilson consented. There was no telling what might happen in these terrible times during those twelve months, and we concluded that it would be better to keep our engagement a secret. Still, to have no confidant at all, wore a clandestine aspect which I did not like. I suggested, and Tobias readily agreed, that we should tell my brother, which we accordingly did. Until this hour I do not think any one else knew or suspected our engagement. That, father, is my secret. Do you forgive me for not trusting you with it before, and will you accept my chosen husband as a son?"

During this frank confession, the face of Tobias Wilson underwent as many changes as there are colors in the rainbow. At first it was suffused by a deep flush, which spread over the whole body, even to the tips of his fingers, and imparted to it a burning glow which made him feel as if a raging fever had seized him. That faded away, and an ashy paleness took its place. He shivered and trembled as if suddenly exposed to the fierce blasts of a Lapland winter. His head swam, a film came over his eyes, and all

things about him were mingled and jumbled together beyond his power to separate them. Yet through all, in every change and mood, the fever flush, the ague chill, and the dull suspension of sight and sense which made objects indivisible and indistinct, and left him powerless to realize where he was, how he came there, and what strange part he was playing,—through all, pervading his whole being, there was spread a vivid consciousness of unutterable bliss. The clasp of her soft hand thrilled every nerve with ecstasy. He could not catch her words, he did not try; but he *felt*, felt to the inmost core of his heart, that it was her voice, and he knew instinctively that the sweet music of its tones, upon which he could have hung entranced forever, was breathing a confession of love for him. Oh! what is there in this world of ours that he who has once loved would not exchange for one moment of a rapture like this! And she, too, what is there about the holiest shrine in heaven more sweet than the gentle love which found its trembling utterance from her lips? And would it always be thus? Would no sin darken, no change come to steal away the brightness from the golden letters with which the angels recorded the touching and simple tale of a love till now unspoken, and whose intensity, even now, she never dreamed of attempting to paint? If those questions had been suggested to her, the heart would have instantly responded, though her lips refused to shape the response into words. She could not change, for her love was the essence of her existence, and inseparably blended with her religion. Sin could not darken it, for the first breath of sin would blast that lovely form and sink it to the grave, as surely and as speedily as the summer rose would wither and die in the icy grasp of winter. To *him* there would come a change, a change sent by the God of nature in mercy, not in anger; for no human frame could long endure the wild rapture now

throbbing in his veins. Other changes too might come; for man's love is a riddle we may not always read, and man's heart is but too apt to become stained in the rude, and sometimes degrading trials through which it must pass. But we are dealing with the *present*, and his love was pure now, pure as it was fervent.

"Ah! would that we were sure
Of hearts so warmly pure,
In all the winter weather that this lesser life must know;
That when shines the sun of love
From a warmer realm above,
In its light we may dissolve like the spirit of the snow."

When Sophy Rogers had concluded her brief "confession," and, turning on her father the warm light of her eyes, asked in her sweetest tones, "Will you accept my chosen husband as a son?" that father caught her in his arms, folded her to his bosom, and impressed a tender kiss upon her forehead.

"Gladly, my child," he answered, "most gladly. I do not think I could have had the heart to thwart your wishes even if you had chosen unworthily. But my judgment approves your choice, and Tobias has long had a warm place in my affections."

"Thank you, my kind, good father. But I knew it would be so. For worlds I would not have formed an engagement which I believed you would disapprove."

Then, turning to Mrs. Wilson, she said:

"And you, dear madam, will you accept me as a daughter? Will you love me, and guide, and instruct me, so that I may become, at some distant day, almost as good and as saintly as you are?"

There was a brilliant flash of joy and gladness in the tearful eyes of the bereaved woman. She clasped the

lovely girl to her throbbing heart, and kissed her again and again, before she murmured, or rather sobbed—but it was the sob of happiness:

"You are better than I am now, darling; better than all of us."

Then, clasping her again to her bosom, she continued:

"Let me hold you here, dearest child, here against my heart. Its beatings will tell you how happy, how very happy, you have made me."

With one arm still encircling the waist of her future daughter-in-law, she called her son.

"Come hither, Tobias. You must share a mother's embrace and accept a mother's kiss."

Drawing them to her, she imprinted kiss after kiss on the lips of each by turns, and only released them when Mr. Rogers advanced, and said:

"You must accept my congratulations, also, Tobias, upon having won the love of the sweetest maiden in Alabama!"

"*In the world!*" said Wilson, grasping the extended hand, and giving it a strong and grateful pressure.

"Well, I am old enough and foolish enough to agree with you."

Sophy was standing by her lover's side, when her father relinquished his hand, and laying her own gently on his arm, she looked up at him tenderly, while a blush suffused her cheek, so deep that it spread a roseate hue over neck and shoulders and bosom. He could see, too, that the long lashes drooping over her eyes were moist with suppressed tears, and his own flowed freely in sympathy with hers. The severest trial she had imposed upon herself was now to come. She trembled, and with difficulty kept back the tear-drops which were struggling to escape from their crystal fountain. But strong in her guileless love, strong

in her convictions of duty, and stronger still in the firm belief that a human soul was that day intrusted to her keeping, and would be lost if she exhibited signs of weakness or wavering, she shook off her painful emotions, and said, almost gayly:

"Confess, Toby, that you would give your right hand to kiss me now."

"I would give my life, Sophy, if you asked it."

"Well, I do not think I should like a husband with one arm, and I know I would not like a dead one; so you may kiss me without sacrificing the one or the other, if you will promise to be a good boy and mind all I say to you. Do you promise?"

"Yes, yes; anything, everything;" and, without waiting for further permission, he eagerly pressed his fevered lips to hers, and for the first time drank in the nectar that was treasured there. In the delirium of his joy, he kissed her again and again before she could release herself from his embrace. At length she put her hand before her mouth, and said:

"Stop, sir, stop. I gave you a kiss, but you have taken three. You have broken faith, Mr. Toby, and shall pay for it. It will be a long time before you get another chance to serve me in this way."

While the scenes I have attempted feebly to describe were being enacted, there was but one pair of dry eyes in the room, and those were the eyes of Thomas Rogers, Jr. Not that there was anything displeasing to him in the frank confession of his sister's love, or in the exclamations of satisfaction, or the cordial exchange of greetings which followed it. But he knew there was something more to come, and he dreaded it. He was satisfied that his sister would never have been induced to act the painful part she was going through, without some high object, and under

the influence of some strong and powerful motive. He had studied her character more thoroughly, and understood her better than his father or Mrs. Wilson; and as for Tobias, he was so much absorbed by his overpowering love, that he could see nothing but what she told him to see. Thomas Rogers knew that his sister had said nothing which she did not feel; that she had not used one expression, or performed one act which did not spring from the heart, and yet he knew that she was acting a part. Not that she was deceiving any one, or meant to do so. She was only telling them, or allowing them to see, the plain, unvarnished truth. She had not exaggerated, she had curtailed rather; she had suppressed the strong expressions of her love, which he could see had more than once trembled on her lips. He would not have been surprised to learn that she had told it in secret to her father and Mrs. Wilson. But why tell it in the presence of others? He knew her timid, sensitive modesty, and he actually shuddered for what he felt she must have suffered, when making up her mind in accordance with some settled plan, some dictate of duty, to offer her lips to be kissed by Tobias Wilson before so many witnesses. What, he thought, could she be after? That she was discharging what she regarded as a high and imperative duty, there could be no doubt. What was it? She knew nothing of the consultations between Tobias and himself. He did not question her ability to extract that, or anything else from her lover, if an opportunity had offered. But there had been no such opportunity; they had not exchanged a dozen words with each other during the day, and Tobias was evidently taken completely by surprise, though he was too happy to show perplexity, or, indeed, to think of it at all. These and kindred thoughts were running through the mind of Thomas Rogers all the time the coffin was being transported to the grave and

lowered into it. But there and then they were superseded by a new perplexity. Just as the minister was about to begin the funeral rites, Sophy Rogers broke the solemn silence which sealed the lips of all present.

"Father," she said, "and you, mother," addressing Mrs. Wilson by that endearing appellative, "you have been very kind to me to-day, in giving your sanction to my union with the man who won my affections long ago, and whom I love with a fervor I have not ventured to express to you, or to him. Standing in the relation we do to one another, is there anything inconsistent with maidenly modesty, in asking the privilege of kneeling by his side, while the prayers of the minister are ascending to Heaven for the soul of our murdered parent?"

All were surprised, and Mrs. Wilson hesitated to answer; but Mr. Rogers, whose kindly instincts prompted him to gratify his daughter in everything, and who moreover firmly believed that it was absolutely impossible for her to cherish a thought or a wish which was not strictly and religiously right and proper, at once answered the unlooked-for question.

"There can surely be no objection if you wish it, my daughter. You are betrothed to him with mine and his mother's free and glad consent. It will be a great comfort to him, poor fellow, to have you by his side in this hour of distress. If you were his wife, it would be your duty to take your place there, and I am not sure that it is not your duty as it is. What say you, Parson King?"

"I say that no one has a right to hinder her. That it will be a goodly and a holy sight, to see these pious children kneeling in humble prayer by the grave of their departed parent, and one which will be blessed of God, and sanctioned by all right-thinking Christians."

"And you, mother?" pleaded Sophy, turning her eyes,

from which the tears now flowed unrestrained, full upon Mrs. Wilson.

"Why, I think that what you wish, and your father and God's minister so decidedly approve, needs no sanction of mine. Nevertheless, dear daughter, you have it. It will do him great good, I am sure, to mingle his prayers with one so sinless as thou art."

"Come then, Tobias," she said, taking his arm and leading him close by the side of the minister; "here is our place."

A hymn was sung; a few appropriate and feeling words were spoken, and then the little congregation knelt in prayer. When it was concluded, they rose to their feet, and Tobias Wilson would have risen with the rest, but Sophy's arm rested on his shoulder, and her head was pressed upon it. Slowly she raised her face, luminous with a glory borrowed from the throne of the Eternal.

"Promise me, Tobias, before we rise from this sacred spot, by all your hopes of salvation hereafter, that you will not seek to avenge the murder of the good man lying here, by any means but those which the law allows."

For a moment Tobias Wilson was petrified. Then every nerve in his manly and well-knit though slender frame quivered as if torn by pincers. He clasped both hands over his face to hide its fearful workings. The strong man became a helpless child. Low, heart-rending sobs swelled his bosom and burst in agony from his lips. Sophy read, in the fierce tempest which shook him within and without, the whole horrid truth,—the demon was there in all his might and power. She now comprehended, for the first time, the full extent of his dreadful danger. She had anticipated a struggle. She had not flattered herself with the hope of an easy triumph; but this was something more terrible than she had calculated to encounter, and she felt

a momentary sinking of the heart as she watched the fury of the struggling passions which assailed and overmastered both mind and body. She uttered a fervent prayer to the Almighty for aid, and her momentary weakness disappeared. The angels rested from their avocations in heaven, and looked down with approving smiles upon the brave, true-hearted girl, who alone and unaided was battling with the prince of evil and his attendant fiends. She raised her arm from the shoulder whereon it rested, and threw it lovingly around his neck.

"Promise me, my own love," she murmured, in a voice sweeter than the melodies of heaven. "You *would promise* me, I am sure you would, if you only knew how happy it would make your betrothed wife."

He was still silent, but there was an enchantment in the clasp of that lovely arm around his neck, and a strange, soft music in the words, "your betrothed wife," which penetrated to his inmost soul, and left the citadel of his heart at her mercy. The violence of his sobs abated, and the strong frame was no longer shaken by uncontrollable passion. With her disengaged hand, she removed one of his from his face, and held it in her soft and loving clasp.

"You are ill, my love, and it makes my heart ache to see you suffer so. Drive away that wicked spirit, whose feasts are of blood, and peace and happiness will return. For your own sake, for your mother's, for mine, promise that you will not do it."

He was now completely vanquished, and the baffled fiend that had rioted in his bosom fled away forever.

"*For your sake, dearest,*" he whispered, so low that the words were inaudible to any ear but hers, "*for your sake*, I will promise anything."

She clasped her arm more tightly about his neck, and her little fingers closed upon his with fervent gratitude,

mingled with triumphant gladness. Her rosy lips were brought very, very close to his ear, and she breathed, rather than spoke:

"You are the conqueror at last, my own love; but you must keep my secret for a few days, until the recollection of this trial ceases to be painful. Now, make the promise you have made to me so that your mother can hear it distinctly, and you may yourself name the day which makes me your wife."

There was a light touch upon his cheek, as if it had been gently brushed by the leaves of a flower; but the blood which tingled through his veins, and danced in joy to his heart, was stirred by something softer than the rose's leaf, and sweeter than the honey of Hybla, or the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion.

His eyes were now sparkling with rays as brilliant as those which glitter in the pearly drops upon a grassy lawn when the rain cloud has passed away, and the bright sun comes to gladden creation with his presence.

"And you will not make me wait that dreary year, to which you had doomed me?"

"Not an hour beyond the time that you yourself shall name. I am yours, now and for evermore."

"*I am, indeed, the conqueror*," was the joyful response. Then in a louder voice, clear, distinct, and firm, he said:

"I call Heaven to witness that, although I believe my grandfather to have been foully murdered by those whom the law will not touch, I dismiss all thoughts of personal revenge, and here freely and solemnly promise, over the dead body of one parent, and in the presence of another, that I will not seek to harm them for this cause, or for any other cause, except in just defense of myself or others; leaving their punishment to the law, and to HIM who has declared 'Vengeance is mine.'"

"Thank God!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilson, leaning heavily for support upon Mr. Rogers.

"Thank God!" repeated Sophy, burying her face in her hands, where she was still kneeling by the side of her lover.

"Let us pray," said the minister; and, kneeling on the bare ground, a prayer of mingled thankfulness and supplication went up to the throne of the MOST HIGH, as fervent as any which ever ascended from the scaffold or the cross, on which the early Christian welcomed the sentence which sealed his MARTYRDOM for his FAITH.

The trial was over. The victory was won; but the victor sank exhausted by the almost superhuman exertions she had been required to make. As long as there was a doubt, while anything remained to be accomplished, she had borne up with more than the fortitude of a martyr; but when it was over, when the danger had passed away, and her lover stood by her side freed from the temptation to sin, her strength failed her, she could not move or speak, but hung in helpless weakness upon the arm of her father, only saved from falling by the strong support it afforded. Mrs. Wilson approached her in much agitation, saying as she did so:

"Nobly, my child, nobly have you redeemed your promise to save him; and as sure as there is a just and merciful God in heaven, you will reap a rich reward."

"Thank you, mother," she replied with difficulty. "But do not speak of it now. I am so weary."

The lovely head was bowed upon her bosom. The gentle form drooped lower and lower. "Hold me, Toby dear," she murmured, and then her senses fled. She had fainted.

They bore her to the house, and laid her gently on a bed. The proper restoratives were applied, and as soon

as she opened her eyes, the surgeon promptly dismissed all the party from the room except Mrs. Wilson. In half an hour he came out himself, and said cheerfully to the anxious group who were awaiting his report with torturing impatience:

"All is well. A deep sleep has fallen upon her, and in a few hours she will be as strong as usual. But," he continued, "she cannot bear the fatigue of crossing the mountain to-day. She must remain here until to-morrow."

Mr. Rogers was not surprised at this, for he had expected as much, and was too much gratified to learn that nothing worse was to be anticipated from the relaxation of the high tension to which her nerves had been strung, to fret at this trifling annoyance.

Mr. Rogers was a widower, and for several years the care of the household had devolved on his daughter. Of late she had been assisted by Mrs. Wilson, a circumstance which afforded Mr. Rogers no small gratification, as it not only enabled his daughter to devote a part of each day to the cultivation of her intellect, (of which he was even more proud than of her unequaled beauty,) but secured to her, in the person of her friend, an instructress far superior to any whose services could be engaged in that section of the country. In addition to a strong and masculine intellect, Mrs. Wilson possessed many feminine accomplishments. Her husband, in his lifetime, was proud of her attainments and fond of showing her off to his friends and even to strangers.

He had been reared in the lap of plenty, and surrounded his young wife with books, music, paintings, implements of art with which she herself made experiments, with everything in short that a taste like hers, at once refined and intellectual, could desire or suggest. His own habits were extravagant, and the consequence was that pecuniary em-

barrassment soon followed. He knew nothing of business, and resorted to all the shifts that such men usually grasp at, and which usually end in ruin. He committed the folly, also, of concealing his real situation from his wife, and she went on squandering sums upon intellectual and social enjoyments, which, judiciously husbanded, would have relieved him of many embarrassments; while he was beset by duns from day to day. At length a time arrived when concealment was no longer possible, and she waked from a dream of wealth to find herself but little better than a pauper. Instead of indulging in reproaches or regrets, she wrote at once to her father, soliciting his presence and assistance. One glance into the affairs of his son-in-law satisfied Mr. Johnson that he was hopelessly insolvent. That son-in-law had never had the courage to go over his own accounts. He had attempted it several times, but each time became discouraged and gave it up. Mr. Johnson took hold of the business with the resolution of a man determined to know the worst. The accounts were audited, those which were fair and honest were marked for settlement, and those which were exorbitant or dishonest, rejected. Everything was then disposed of at public sale, except a portion of the household furniture, books, music, implements for drawing and painting, and certain articles of *virtu* which Mr. Wilson had collected for his wife. The money thus obtained was promptly applied to the payment of the most necessitous creditors, and Mr. Johnson removed his daughter and son-in-law to his own house, in an adjoining State. In a few months afterward Tobias Wilson was born; but the gladness which this event would otherwise have caused, was overshadowed by apprehensions for his father. Mr. Wilson had never recovered from the stunning effects of his misfortune. His wife had at once accommodated herself to their changed

circumstances. But he lost all energy, and gave himself up to despair. From being the gayest and most light-hearted of human beings, he became pensive, gloomy, discontented and querulous. His wife alone had power to chase the gloom from his brow, and the peevishness from his heart. Whenever he was out of her presence he became disagreeable, if not absolutely rude to every one about him. Mr. Johnson had tried in vain to correct this unmanly fault. Finally he concluded that the best treatment would be to let him alone, in the hope that in a year or two the grief which afflicted him would wear itself out, and he might yet become a useful member of society. The good effects of this judicious treatment had just begun to manifest themselves, when a new cause for anxiety arose. His health began to fail, and the physicians pronounced his disease consumption. In six months after the birth of his son, John Tobias Wilson was in his grave. His wife had loved him dearly, and her grief for his loss was deep and sincere. But her father allowed her little time for its indulgence. With the prompt decision of his character, he sold out his own property, never very large, paid off the remainder of the debts of his son-in-law, and settled himself upon a smaller property, where he still had all the comforts and most of the luxuries of life. The education of Tobias Wilson may almost be said to have begun in his cradle. He had no teachers but his grandfather, but *he* was a competent and indefatigable one. And as the boy grew in years, his mother and his grandfather congratulated themselves upon the high promise of future usefulness which at an early age began to manifest itself in his conduct and deportment. Years went by, and each returning season saw that little family contented and happy. About this time a new and virulent disease broke out in the neighborhood. It was called the "black tongue." They had read

of its ravages in other places and were greatly alarmed, especially on account of the boy, who now constituted the sole link between them and posterity; but they were so situated that they could not fly, and probably would not have done so if they could; Mr. Johnson saying he had often observed that persons fleeing from the pestilence, after they had once breathed its malaria, were more liable to be stricken down than those who remained. His family was among the last that were visited. But when it did come, it made amends for the delay by added malignity. He was himself "taken down," and hovered long on the confines of life and death. He recovered to find that all the most valuable of his servants had been carried off, and almost the whole of his year's crop was lost for the want of hands to cultivate it. One year's experiment satisfied him that he could not recover his losses, or continue to live in the style to which he was accustomed, if he remained where he was; and he determined to make a journey to the Southwest, in quest of a new home. When he returned, he announced to his daughter that he had purchased a secluded farm in the mountains of North Alabama. Without a word of objection she made her arrangements to accompany him. The few servants who remained were emancipated, and a piece of ground reserved for their support. Everything else was sold, except the bedclothes and such household articles as they could carry with them. The property which Mrs. Wilson had reserved from her husband's estate was carefully packed up and left in the custody of a merchant in the neighboring town.

"You have no daughter, Maria," he remarked to Mrs. Wilson, "but these things will make a handsome and useful present to your son's wife, when he is fortunate enough to get one. To you they will be henceforth useless, as we are not likely to have a house fit to contain them, nor is it

probable that you will have the leisure to amuse yourself with them."

It was thus that Robert Johnson became a resident of the little valley where he at last met his death at the hands of three blood-thirsty assassins.

In the double character of assistant and instructress to his favorite child, during the short time she had been under his roof, Mrs. Wilson had become very dear to Mr. Rogers, and as he thought indispensable to his family. He looked to her for advice and assistance in all things that concerned his family affairs. When the inability of his daughter to return home that day was announced to him, he was delighted to know that she would be in the care and company of Mrs. Wilson, and made arrangements for his own return without a thought of uneasiness. It was decided that Parson King should accompany him,—the two young men remaining to finish the day's work of burying the dead, and the doctor to watch over his sweet patient, and to note the symptoms that might develop themselves during the night in the wounded guerrilla.

As Mr. Rogers and his companion ascended the steep and rugged sides of the mountain, the body of Jenkins was borne by the strong arms of Thomas Rogers and Tobias Wilson to the grave they had dug for its reception. But few words were spoken until their work was done. Then Thomas Rogers, leaning on his spade, and plunging at once, without any prefatory remark, into the middle of the subject which occupied the thoughts of both, addressed his companion with evident sympathy and condolence.

"You had a fearful trial, Tobe, and I pitied you from my soul. I pitied you the more because I knew how it would end, and I thought what a terrible thing it was to suffer so much, and yet have to 'give in' at last. But you battled manfully, far better than I thought you could I

thought she would not be three seconds in getting your promise, whereas you held out so firmly, that even I began to doubt whether she would get it at all. You didn't win, for that was impossible, but you made a glorious fight. I felt proud of you, Tobe, even while crying like a baby over what you suffered. I held up till then, but I couldn't stand it any longer."

"I thank you, Thomas, sincerely thank you. But, really, I do not believe there is a man in America over whom his friends have less cause to weep than mine have."

"That may be so now; but it wasn't so an hour ago, when you were shivering and trembling and groaning and sobbing as if somebody had taken a mallet and mashed your heart as flat as a pancake. Good God! man, I never saw such suffering before, and I hope I may never see it again; and I could see plainly enough that she wasn't much better off than you were, as hard as she tried to hide it!"

"I trust in God she may have suffered no more!" said Wilson, a sudden and dreadful apprehension seizing him; "it would kill me if anything serious happened to her from this day's work!"

"No fear of that. Sophy is not a thing of gossamer threads. She is as strong and healthy as she is brave and high-hearted. The worst is over. All she needs now is a good sleep and a little petting by your mother, which she is sure to get. And you seem to have recovered wonderfully quick from your troubles. What was it she whispered to you that made you stop crying and sobbing so suddenly?"

"Ask her; or, if you can afford to wait patiently for a day or two, I think she will tell you herself in that time."

"No, she won't; for I have no idea of giving her a chance. After witnessing the ordeal through which you were compelled to pass, I have not the slightest inclination

to subject myself to such a trial. She is my sister, and cannot be my wife; she cannot therefore torture me as she did you. But I love her enough to make it very hard to say *no* when she tells me to say 'yes.' Enough to enable her to wring the blood from my heart-strings if she should take it into her head to make the experiment. I have seen enough this day to be certain that she *will* do so if she gets a hint of what I am about to do, No, no, Tobe, you don't catch me putting myself in her way until all is over."

"Thomas," said Wilson, very seriously, "we have known and loved each other for more than ten years, and that is a lifetime to people as young as we are. In looking back upon the past, your friendship is the one single ray which illumined my solitary boyhood——"

"You forget Sophy's love," interrupted his companion.

"No, I don't. Nor my mother's, nor my grandfather's, nor your father's. But that is not what I mean. I do not mean to say that I have been without love or sympathy, or that I have been unhappy, or even felt my lot a sad one, or my situation irksome. I mean that of young persons of my own age and sex, you are the only friend I ever had. That friendship is the one cherished memory of my boyhood and youth, and it has made you very dear to me. Before long I shall have the right to call you brother as well as friend. Sophy told me to-day that I might myself name the day, and even the hour, for our wedding."

"Did she?" again interrupted Rogers; "then she took a most unfair advantage of you, and your promise to her isn't worth a straw. It was bribery and corruption of the rankest kind. That temptation would have lured an angel from the skies. She didn't give you a fair chance, or for that matter, any chance at all, and I hold that you are not bound by the promise you made her. You were not a free

agent, no more than if you had been under the influence of mesmerism."

Wilson could not help smiling, as he had often done before, at the enthusiasm of his friend's admiration for his sister, and the frank and guileless manner in which he allowed that admiration to appear on all occasions when her name was mentioned. But his thoughts were too serious to admit of the presence of more than a transitory gleam of melancholy humor and pleasantry.

"I did not promise her alone," said Wilson; "I promised the dead, my mother, and my God. I cannot break that promise, nor do I wish to do so. A few hours have wrought in me a great change. Your sister is my guardian angel. She has saved me from myself. Not only the demon of revenge, but all other demons, fled away at her bidding, I trust never to return. Oh, Thomas! if you love me, if you love her, if you care for your own salvation, tell her what you propose to do, and at least listen to what she has to say."

Thomas Rogers was affected by this appeal more than he chose to acknowledge. He had made up his mind, and, in his own opinion, he had made it up rightly. From that opinion he knew his sister and his father would both dissent. He had no wish to argue the point with them. He was satisfied that they could not change his purpose but they could make it very painful for him to adhere to it. By extinguishing, at once and forever, all hope in the mind of Tobias Wilson, he knew that he would secure the silence of his future brother-in-law, and thus prevent any imprudent communication or hint from him which would lead his relatives to suspect the dark and deadly deed he meditated, and the plan of which he had already nearly matured. With an affectation of lightness, he replied:

"I claim the credit of being a prophet, Toby. I told

you that you would use the very language you have now employed. I told you that whenever you spoke to Sophy on this subject you would come to regard the object you had most at heart as irredeemably wicked, and that you would call her your guardian angel, for preserving you from doing the very thing you most wished to do. I knew too, though I did not say it, that you would give her credit for being able to control me as she has done you. But it will not do, my friend. If there was another girl in this world just like her, who was not so nearly related to me, I might surrender as you did,—I am sure I should; but that is not the case, and any discussion between us would only give pain to both, without altering, in the least, my fixed resolution. I beg, therefore, that you will not intimate, in any manner whatever, anything you may know or suspect of my part in any little tragedy which may be enacted in this neighborhood. You will also please to consider this prohibition as extending to my father. I shall conceal what I intend to do from them, both before and after it is done. If they find it out in spite of me, I must take the chances of being able to justify the deed."

Tobias Wilson did not reply. He knew it would be useless. His eyes were apparently fixed upon the fresh clods of the newly closed grave before him. But in reality he saw nothing. He was running over in his mind the chances of his friend's success or failure. Then he shudderingly admitted the disagreeable conviction, that whether he succeeded or failed, he was preparing a bounteous crop of grief for his relatives, and of unutterable woe for himself.

Thomas Rogers, too, was lost in thought. He was, however, the first to recover himself.

"Your promise, Toby, honestly construed, prevents you from assisting me, or any one else, in the accomplishment

of the object which yesterday you had so much at heart. I would not have you depart from its spirit or its letter by one hair's breadth, and I am certain you *would not* if I were base enough to ask you. Keep it in its widest sense. Keep it for Sophy's sake; for it would break her heart to suspect you of being capable of a meanness. But your promise does not bind you to refuse me your assistance if I should get into trouble."

"Certainly not. Nor does it bind me not to defend you if at any time, no matter from what cause, you should need the presence of a friend at your side. Count on me in every such emergency,—you shall not be disappointed!"

"I thought so, and I thank you. There is one thing more which I must say before this conversation ends. I would not have you to think that I am governed in this matter by a mere spirit of revenge. Mr. Johnson was my father's friend and mine. He had always been more kind to me than any one I ever knew, except my own father. It is my sister's fault, or her good fortune, whichever you please, which prevents his only male descendant from administering justice upon his murderers. The task is thus, in some sort, rightfully devolved on me, and I have no disposition to let his blood cry out from the ground in vain. That much is true. It is also true that I am a Union man, as decided and uncompromising as any other within the limits of this broad Republic, at the North or at the South, and being so, I have no disposition to permit a good man to be shot down upon his own premises for no other sin than that of loving his whole country better than a section. So far as these two facts may be supposed to prompt me to revenge, I plead guilty. Yet these alone would not be sufficient to induce me to undertake what I have sworn to accomplish or perish. I am persuaded that a great and pressing danger threatens my father and you and me, and

the few other Union men in this immediate neighborhood, from the same source.

"The ice is now broken. The first murder has been committed. If the perpetrators are allowed to escape unharmed for a few weeks, they will be emboldened to repeat the tragedy. Other actors, too, will appear upon the stage. Arson will follow murder, and it will soon become impossible for any Union man to live in these mountains unless he turns traitor and becomes a cut-throat himself. The best and surest defense often consists in striking the first blow; and I propose to shape my action in accordance with that policy. And now that you understand me fully, let us drop the subject for 'good and all.' Whatever you see, whatever you hear, whatever you suspect, say nothing. Keep my secret. I have seen to-day how you could hold out when your heart was breaking and your frame quivering as if shattered by a thunder-bolt, and, as my sister cannot make you any more promises of marriage, I shall feel tolerably safe if you will only give me your word not to betray me."

The pledge was given and accepted, and the two friends returned to the house, where they found Dr. Griffin sitting by the side of the wounded soldier. He said that Sophy had awakened from her sleep much refreshed, and he did not think it probable she would again require his services. His report of Sergeant Miller's case was not so favorable. Fever had supervened, and he had been at times delirious. Amputation might become necessary, though he hoped not. He could tell better in the morning. He added that it would be necessary for some one to sit up with him during the coming night, and, as the young men had not slept at all the preceding one, and had labored hard during the day he proposed to take that duty upon himself. It still wanted something like an hour to sunset, and he calculated that he

could get enough sleep by the usual bedtime to enable him to get through with the night's vigil without difficulty. Throwing himself upon the bed, he charged Tobias Wilson not to wake him for supper, but to wait until nine o'clock, adding a strict injunction that his coffee, in the mean time, should be kept well heated.

By the time the various little things requiring attention about the farm was looked after, the sun went down. Cheerful fires were lighted. Mrs. Wilson undertook to prepare a little tea and toast for Sophy Rogers and herself; and Tobias, who was no mean cook, employed himself in getting a more substantial supper for his masculine guests. At the appointed hour the doctor was roused from his "nap," and drank his coffee with a high degree of satisfaction. His patient had slept heavily, but it was that dull, leaden sleep which brings no refreshment. The doctor pronounced him worse, but after administering a dose of medicine he sent the young men to their beds, saying that he would call them during the night if he needed assistance.

What visions thronged about the pillow of Tobias Wilson that night, when for the first time the woman to whose keeping he had surrendered his very soul slumbered beneath his roof-tree! Did the spirit of evil flap his somber wings above his head, and take a malignant pleasure in calling up phantom shapes to torture the helpless sleeper, and darken the love, whose birth-place was a purer orb than this? Or did the good genii, who had leaned in breathless anxiety from the battlements of heaven to watch the stern and bitter contest of that young and inexperienced heart with the powers of darkness, did they gather around his couch to color his dreams with anticipated happiness, and sweeten his slumbers with a foretaste of the raptures he had so nobly earned? Alone and unaided, save by the prayers of one gentle and tender girl, he had won that mightiest of

victories—a victory over himself. A strong human heart, strong in its original sinfulness, and rendered doubly strong by the natural promptings of filial affection, and the mistaken conception of filial duty, had been vanquished in fair fight by a mere youth, whose only stay and support was the good seed sown in early life, and the hallowing presence of her upon-whom all the wealth of his affections had been lavished, and who divided with his God the worship of his soul. Was it sin thus to place an earthly idol on an altar dedicated to the MOST HIGH, and mingle veneration of the CREATOR with adoration of the *creature?* Oh! no. Religion itself is born of love! Implicit obedience to the law was too hard an ordeal for human nature to pass through, and therefore a merciful Redeemer substituted love for himself and the Father, instead of obedience, as a condition of salvation. No matter what may be the crime which bars the soul from Paradise, that love is an all-sufficing atonement. Then why should not its virtues be increased rather than diminished, when it encircles alike in its warm embrace the brilliancy of the Godhead and the gentle and tender glories which He himself has imparted to the purest and the loveliest of his creations? Yet why should we trouble ourselves with questions whose solution belongs not to us? Why speculate upon what we can never know with certainty until the Supreme Ruler of the universe has taken his seat upon the judgment throne, and the great book is opened, and the law expounded for eternity? Let us rest contented with the knowledge which is not forbidden, and be assured at all times that it is not in the field of reason but in the instincts of the heart that we must look for a guide to pilot us safely over the dim and shadowy pathway which leads to the unknown HEREAFTER!

To his own heart Tobias Wilson put no questions. He

had no doubts to solve, and was troubled with no vain imaginings. Almost as soon as his head touched the pillow, he slumbered soundly. The day's fatigue, added to the loss of sleep the preceding night, acted as a powerful opiate, and for hours his slumbers were undisturbed and dreamless. His first consciousness was that of a rosy light, which seemed to fall in mingled glory and beauty around him. Slowly, but clearly and distinctly, two forms were shaped upon the outer border of the luminous atmosphere in which he seemed to be submerged. It was his mother and Sophy Rogers who stood by his bedside, looking down upon him with unutterable love and joy. That vision faded away, and he saw himself standing in the middle of a small room, with a veiled figure by his side. She wore no wedding garments but the long veil which covered her head and fell in wavy folds over her neck and shoulders. But before him, with an open book in his hand, stood a minister whom he recognized right well, and around him were all those he loved best on earth, while the background was filled up by a group of soldiers leaning on their muskets, and apparently completely absorbed by what was going on before them. This also faded away. He was once more in his own secluded home: Sophy Rogers was there arranging his scanty household furniture, but her face was grave and serious; and his mother went from one room to the other, with an anxious and troubled look. A shadow was upon his own heart, a vague feeling of impending woe, and this was increased as he saw a horseman coming up the narrow valley at headlong speed. What more his dream might have revealed we cannot tell, for at that moment he was rudely shaken by Dr. Griffin.

"Get up!" shouted the doctor; "it is broad daylight. Get up and attend to your business. My patient is doing much better than I expected, and I shall sleep until breakfast."

The two young men rose and left the house. By the time they returned, the female inmates were also dressed. Meeting them in the passage, Sophy greeted her brother with a sisterly kiss; but though she only extended her hand to her affianced lover, there was a soft light in her eyes and a rosy tinge on her cheeks which told more eloquently than words how dear he was to that guileless heart, and how gladly she would welcome the hour which bestowed upon her the holy name of WIFE.

Breakfast was over. It was decided that Tobias Wilson should accompany the doctor and the ladies to the other side of the mountain, while Thomas Rogers remained to watch over the wounded soldier.

As soon as they were gone, Rogers took a seat by the bedside, and held a long and earnest conversation with the patient. The two guns carried by Jenkins and the Sergeant, and which were dropped by them on the night of their discomfiture, had been brought into the house, and, together with their revolvers and accoutrements, thrown carelessly in a corner of the room. During the conversation, Rogers rose and brought one of them to the bed. It was a Spencer rifle. He had never seen one of them before; but its merits, and the manner of using it, were soon explained. There were some fifty cartridges already made, but this did not satisfy him, and he inquired somewhat anxiously for the moulds.

"In my haversack," was the reply. "We picked up these guns upon the battle-field of Perryville. We got some four or five moulds with them, and a large amount of cartridges. I kept a pair of moulds and Simmons kept another, though we thought we had ammunition enough to last us for a year. Simmons's is at the house where we buried him, and also his gun and a *wallet* of cartridges. Mine is in my haversack there, for I always carried it with

me. As soon as I am able to ride, I will get Simmons's gun and moulds and cartridges from the place where they are hid."

"It will be better to do so on many accounts," replied Rogers. "Though with one pair of moulds I can make cartridges enough to last a company for the war."

The gun was replaced, and Rogers again seated himself by Sergeant Miller. It was evident that a good understanding had grown up between them, and Rogers soon learned all he wished to know of the habits of Capt. Joshua Wilkins, Confederate States Conscript Bureau. Although he was one of the conscript guard, Miller knew very little of Parson Williams or Jim Biles. He had seen Parson Williams once at Wilkins's house, and might have seen Biles, but he did not know him, and could not say they had ever met. He communicated to Rogers the further information that Wilkins was making arrangements to move on the south side of the river, and had given orders for all of his guard, who were scattered over the country in pursuit of recruits for Jeff. Davis's army and plunder for themselves, to report at his house in ten days' time.

"Ah!" muttered Rogers. "Then I have no time to lose!"

Addressing the wounded man, he said, slowly and emphatically, watching at the same time with keen interest the expression of his countenance:

"You tell me, Sergeant Miller, that your father is a strong Union man, and that you yourself were dragged from an honest and respectable home, and forced to become a robber, in order to save those you loved from poverty and want. You surely cannot feel any great attachment to the usurping government which has brought you to this."

"Attached to the Confederacy! Good God! what have I to thank it for? I've fought for it as I've seen thousands

of others do, not because I wanted to, but because I was in the ranks, and didn't like to be whipped. Many and many is the time I would have run away rather than fire a gun, but I was afraid they would say I ran from cowardice; and then there was the plundering privileges to reconcile me to the service. But still, I never loved it, and I hate a conscript officer as I do the horns of the Devil!"

"Will you keep of this mind, sergeant, when your wounds are healed?"

"To be sure I shall! I wish to God I had never seen a Confederate flag. I should have been poor, but contented and *honest*. I would not have been afraid to look my father in the face, for fear he would see signs of thieving there. If I ever willingly look on it again, it will be when I am standing face to face with those who are carrying it, with a good rifle in my hands and a Bowie knife in my belt!"

"If such are your feelings, I think we shall be good friends hereafter, and it may be, have work to do together. When you are able to ride, I will tell you more. By-the-way, your horse only ran a short distance after you fell. We found him the next morning in the field: your saddle and everything about him was uninjured. He is now in the stable."

"And my saddle, where is it?"

"Hanging up in the passage. You told us there was money quilted in it, and we brought it to the house.

"There is something more than money. Please bring it here, and put it under my head. It has been my pillow many a night, and I shall rest easier upon it than upon these feathers."

Tobias Wilson rode slowly enough until they reached the place of separation, for he was by the side of her who was the world to him, and listening to that voice in which

all the music of earth was gathered. But no word was spoken of that which was nearest to the hearts of both. She seemed to dread any allusion to the events of the past day, and kept so close to his mother and Dr. Griffin that he could find no opportunity for alluding to them. When they reached the bench of the mountain which had been designated as the place of separation, she held out her hand to him, and said with an effort at gayety:

"Good-by, Toby. Do not come to see me to-morrow. I shall not be strong enough to talk to you. And besides, I wish to have a long, long chat with our mother."

Our mother! There was a balm in those two words which almost healed the wound her first sentence had inflicted. He seized her hand in his, pressed it twice to his lips, murmured "Good-by," and without a word to his mother or Dr. Griffin, wheeled his horse and rode madly up the steep mountain side.

CHAPTER VII.

Tobias Wilson returned to his own dwelling in some perplexity as to what disposition should be made of his prisoner. He could not be removed in his present condition, nor was it certain that any of his secession friends would take him in, provide for his wants, and secure proper medical attendance. Yet Tobias felt a repugnance to sheltering in his house one whom he believed to be a lawless bandit, as unprincipled as he was dangerous. He thought of riding down to Paint Rock Station, and reporting the facts to the U. S. officer who was superintending the erection of a bridge over the river of that name. When he mentioned the subject to his friend, he was surprised to hear him declare warmly, that Sergeant Miller was not half so bad as Tobias thought him. That he had been forced against his will into bad company, and though he had certainly been contaminated by the examples about him, he was, nevertheless, honest and true at heart, and there were strong reasons to believe that if he ever recovered, he would yet serve the Union faithfully and efficiently. Tobias had no doubt of Sergeant Miller's ability to render excellent service to the good cause, but he did doubt his willingness to abandon the rebel cause. He thought that with returning health, his evil propensities would also return. He was satisfied that the only safe course was to surrender him to the United States troops, and thus place him in a situation where he could not, at

least until regularly exchanged, again associate himself with the lawless bands under Wheeler's command. Thomas Rogers assented to the propriety of reporting the facts to the nearest Union commander, but vehemently protested against the bad opinion his friend entertained and expressed of the sergeant. In conclusion, he said:

"He will turn out all right, and you'll see it. To-morrow I will ride down myself and make a report to Colonel ———. You can stay at home and get some of the grass out of your crop. It has been neglected enough of late to need it. I will be back to-morrow evening, and will stay with you a week or so to help you. Father does not need me at home, and I have no particular desire to have his eyes, and those of your mother and Sophy, all three watching my movements or reading my thoughts in this tell-tale face."

In accordance with this suggestion, Thomas Rogers the next day paid a visit to the quarters of Colonel ———. Tobias noticed, but without making any remark, or indeed entertaining any suspicion of the cause at the time, that his friend had put on the accoutrements of Jenkins, and carried one of the Spencer rifles, instead of his own. That evening Thomas Rogers returned, as he had promised; bringing with him a paper which exempted Sergeant James Miller from arrest or capture; and another, reciting that Thomas Rogers, Jr., was a loyal citizen of the United States; engaged in its service; and as such entitled to the protection and assistance of Union soldiers whenever it was demanded. Tobias thought he was uneasy about something. His manner was hurried; and once or twice he stopped in the middle of a sentence, as if his mind was occupied by more engrossing thoughts. These things did not pass unobserved; but as he was sure full confidence would be reposed in him at last, he did not attempt to ex-

tract it by questions, which he was convinced would now be disagreeable.

Placing an opiate by the side of Miller, where he could easily reach it if needed during the night, and bidding him call them if he required assistance, the young men retired early to rest. In a few days they had gone through much that was calculated to weary the mind and exhaust the body; but there is a vitality in youth and health, a recuperative power, which we never realize until years have come to shake the system with its enervating grasp, and make us wonder why it is we cannot bear up under fatigues from which in earlier life we would have deemed it unmanly to shrink. The wearing away of the mind is slower. It will bear up under harder tasks and a more prolonged exertion. But both mind and body will give out at last, and each succeeding tax upon their powers lessens the ability to recover their original tone and strength. Tobias Wilson and Thomas Rogers were upon the very threshold of life. Fatigue and exertion only brought to them a sweeter sleep when the day was gone, and night spread its mantle over the earth. There was no restless tossing on the bed, no turning of the pillow heated by a fevered cheek. Still and calm and stirless they lay clasped in the arms of Morpheus, unconscious of the toils and cares of life, its griefs, its promises, or its hopes. There were many things which weighed upon the thoughts of both,—alike in absorbing interest, though widely differing in character,—yet both were wrapped in a deep and moveless slumber, until the shrill voice of the barn-yard chanticleer proclaimed the coming of the day king, with his fears and anxieties, his joys and his duties in his train.

Sergeant Miller had also slept soundly and well. The fever had left him, his appetite had returned; and when Tobias Wilson set out on his tacitly promised visit to his

mother and his affianced wife, he was able to carry to Dr. Griffin the assurance that his patient was in a much better state than could have been expected, and promised soon to be able to dispense with his visits.

"We must not jump to conclusions too hastily," replied the doctor. "To-morrow there may be a change for the worse. I will come over in the evening, and remain all night. Make your preparations accordingly; and be good enough to remember that I have an excellent appetite, and that I am fond of being made comfortable *generally*, which, by-the-way, I am never sure of when there is no woman to overlook things about the house."

Tobias was warmly greeted by his mother and Mr. Rogers. By Sophy he was welcomed with a smile so winning that he felt himself repaid a hundredfold for the brief banishment she had imposed upon him. Mr. Rogers did not remain long in the house; and Mrs. Wilson, who had not forgotten her own days of youth and love, conveniently remembered something she had promised to look after in the garden, and, taking down her sun-bonnet from the place where it was hanging, walked out, and left them alone. One hour before, Tobias Wilson would have given a world for the blessed privilege of pouring out the deep flood of his feelings, unchecked by other eyes or ears, before her who was

"The ocean to the river of his thoughts."

But that opportunity came so soon, it was so unexpected, and it seemed so strange that it should thus have offered itself without maneuvering or effort on his part, that he was completely overpowered. Then his embarrassment was increased by the very consciousness of its existence, until it deepened into a feeling very nearly akin to fear. His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. He could not have spoken

a word if his life had depended upon it. Ashamed of his weakness, and dreading that she might discover it, he made a desperate effort—drew his chair nearer, and took her unresisting hand in his. Sophy had not once looked toward him since Mrs. Wilson left the room; she did not now raise her eyes from the silk apron on which they seemed to rest, but she knew what was going on in his bosom, and felt so much for the embarrassment from which he was suffering that she tried herself to break the painful yet blissful silence. The effort was in vain; the syllables failed to shape themselves into words, and died away in inarticulate murmurs upon her lips. That, however, was enough to break the spell which tied her lover's tongue. The deep love that had become the essence of his life, and whose free expression had been so long restrained by the injunctions of his mistress, now found a voice, and with the rich eloquence which always flows from lips sincerely earnest, he painted the first buddings of that tender passion which glided gently, with timid loveliness, into his heart, and made it a resting-place forever. He described how it grew and flourished amid doubts, and fears, and anxieties, with now and then a ray of gladness, when a soft word or a tender look excited hopes that he did not love in vain. Then came the stormy struggle which followed the conviction that his love must be spoken, or the torturing suspense of the heart would sting the brain to madness. He told with what humble self-distrust his confession had been made; meekly, and with unfeigned lowliness of mind, he acknowledged how daring were his aspirations, and confessed how poor and mean he felt while kneeling before a shrine at which the winged cherubim might have joyed to worship. In a firmer tone, but still with a voice in which timidity was mingled with exultation, he proclaimed how he had been lifted from earth and translated to the seventh heaven, when the secret of

her heart was wrung from her lips, and with tears and blushes she confessed that his love was returned, and his presumptuous dream was a crowned reality. Again his voice changed, and his speech became hesitating and tremulous, as, with guileless unreserve, he told how his heart had yearned for one soft pressure from the lips which had just made him the happiest of created things. And yet he dared not ask a privilege which seemed to him too great for mortal enjoyment.

"I have read somewhere," he added, "though I do not believe it, that every cloud has a silver lining; that, no matter how black and thunderous it may appear, there is always a ray of light to relieve it of a portion of its gloom, and satisfy the beholder that all is not darkness within. The reverse of the picture is more likely to be true. We see more frequently the tear follow the smile, than the smile succeeding to the tear. The silver lining of the cloud is not always visible, and sorrow often visits us without an antidote for the poison it infuses into the heart. On the other hand, joy never makes its appearance unless accompanied by some dark shadow to sadden the sunshine it cannot altogether destroy. Even so was it with the rosy beams which fell around me in showers of radiance when those lips confessed that I had won the priceless treasure of your love. In that blessed hour, at the very moment when the feelings which were swelling in my bosom would not have been exchanged for the raptures of heaven, suddenly and unexpectedly came the shadow and the night. I was loved. I knew it; I saw it; I felt it. I was loved, and of that consciousness I could not be deprived until the soul, as well as the body, had undergone the sentence of annihilation. But with that consciousness came the bitter injunction that I should cease to worship, or, at least, that I should worship in silence and afar off, when my soul was yearning to

pour forth its burning tale at the feet of the object of its idolatry."

Sophy Rogers had listened to her lover's rhapsody with an interest whose intense delight was akin to pain. It was a delight too pure for gratified vanity, too sacred for the presence of a selfish thought. Occasionally she raised her eyes to his; for a moment they would meet his gaze, into which was thrown a pathos and a pleading eloquence that words cannot describe; then they would sink again, while a warmer flush tinged her cheek, and her little hand could just be felt to tremble in the strong grasp that held it. At other times the long silken lashes would droop until they were closed as if in slumber. In every change of feature he could read her thoughts as plainly as if they had been written upon a scroll illuminated from above. She believed all, hoped all, trusted all. He saw it, and his soul was drunk with happiness. If love like hers could be repaid with answering love, oh! how lavishly was the price thrown at her feet! In his opinion the incarnation of the poet's dream would have been cold and lifeless when placed by the side of a beauty which was all his own. Imagination was powerless to draw a picture which would rival the reality. Even the words, whose strong spirit of devotion had impressed them on his memory, now seemed tame and lifeless, as he inwardly repeated the lines:

"Her soul's a spotless pearl—
And when she throws her shining hair
Back from her brow of light,
There's nothing, nothing half so fair,
So clearly, purely white.
And then her breath, the warm south wind,
Long nestling in the rose,
May somewhat image to your mind,
Its sweetness as it flows.

The nectar of that sinless lip—
The incense of that breath,
E'en were it poison I could sip,
And joy in drinking death."

There was a brief silence when he ceased to speak, the silence of unalloyed happiness. It was broken by her:

"And did you believe, dear Toby, that injunction cost me no pain? Oh! it was a bitter, bitter trial, but it was a duty; and if our duties were always pleasant, there would be small merit in their performance."

"You were right, dearest, and I was very wrong to murmur. Pardon the error, for it sprung from love for you; a love too blind and headstrong to heed the voice of reason."

"Not so, Toby. That is not the love I have hugged to my heart of hearts with a fervor equal to your own. My love is based on reason. From that fountain comes the invigorating draught which gives to it a deathless existence."

"I am rebuked, justly rebuked," he replied; "and yet if I had consulted reason I should never have sought to win your love. There is so wide a gulf between us. You are so pure and sinless; standing upon a pinnacle so high above me, that if I had stopped to reason I should have turned coward, and lost all."

"You will spoil me, Toby, if you flatter so. If such thoughts come into your mind, keep them to yourself. I fear they are already too sweet, and, coming from your lips, I am too willing to listen to them. If I hear them much oftener, they may breed other thoughts which are surely sinful."

Thus the innocent girl, with gentle modesty, sought to turn the conversation from herself, and, leading the way to other themes, endeavored to direct her lover from compli-

ments which she deemed extravagant, and language which made her little heart beat quicker with pleasure, even while she feared it would foster the sins of pride and self-righteousness.

But his thoughts were too full of that one subject; the temptation to dwell upon the story of his love, after the long prohibition which had sealed his lips, was too great to be overcome by a reproof so mild; and several times in the few minutes which succeeded, the fault was repeated, and each time the rebuke which followed was less positive and decided. There was still one subject upon which they had not touched. It had doubtless occurred to the minds of both more than once during their conversation. To her it was prohibited by maidenly reserve, and he shrank from it with that inconsistent timidity which so often, in every-day life, makes us hesitate to speak the wish that is nearest to our hearts, and dread the utterance of a request we would not fail to prefer for all the rubies of earth. It was not without a strong mental effort that Tobias Wilson at last abruptly "broke the ice:"

"You promised, Sophy, to become my wife whenever I should ask it, and that blessed promise has been to me a joy no tongue can express. I give up my right to name the day, and wait to hear it from your lips. If you love me, dearest, as I love you, let the time be brief."

"I will not pretend," she replied, "that I did not expect this proposal to-day. I expected you to make it the first opportunity you had of doing so, and in truth I should have felt hurt if you had thought so little of my promise as not to have recalled it. I have therefore thought it over, with all its consequences, as calmly as I could; and in spite of my earnest wish to think otherwise, I cannot help feeling that our marriage now would be imprudent. Will you not agree," she continued, laying her hand upon his

arm and looking up with a pleading look into his face, where she could plainly see that a cloud was gathering, "will you not consent to postpone it until happier times shall come to bless this distracted and divided land?"

"No!—no!—a thousand times no. You surely do not mean to break the pledge you freely gave!"

Her eyes fell, and a shade of sadness settled on her face. Her tone was reproachful, but her voice firm and steady, as she replied:

"Did you ever know me, Tobias Wilson, to break a promise once given, or to seek to evade it by indirection? What have you ever seen in me to justify the cruel suspicion you have just allowed yourself to express? I did make that promise freely, as you have said, and it shall be redeemed this hour if you demand it."

Humbled and abased he threw himself at her feet.

"Pardon me! Pardon me! if I have said anything to wound you. I would not bring a shadow upon that brow for all the stars that glitter in the dome of heaven. Nor am I base enough to forget that your promise was given to save my soul from perdition, and that it would be the act of a wicked and ungrateful coward to hold you to it. You are absolved from it fully and entirely. Decide this matter according to the dictates of your own heart. I do not even ask you to remember the impatience of mine."

"Not so, Toby. I will not take advantage of your generosity. My father and your mother shall decide for us."

She extended her hand as she spoke; he clasped it in his, raised it to his lips, and, still holding it, led her into the garden where Mrs. Wilson was seemingly engaged in "putting to rights" plants and shrubs that an indifferent spectator would have supposed required no attention.

The object of their coming was soon explained. Mrs.

Wilson called them her dear, good children, blessed them fervently, and promised to decide with an eye single to their happiness. But she would give no opinion until the return of Mr. Rogers, who was not looked for until nightfall. It was arranged that Tobias should remain to dinner and then return home. In a few days he was told that he might ride over and hear the decision. Sophy noticed the dissatisfied expression of his countenance when his mother repeated the words, in *a few days*. He had calculated upon an answer the next day at furthest. But he said nothing, and Sophy's faint smile was the only commentary upon his evident impatience.

The mid-day meal was nearly concluded when Mr. Rogers rode up to his gate. His daughter met him at the door.

"Welcome, father! But we did not expect you so soon!"

"No; nor did I expect to return before night. But the gentleman I went to see had been summoned on a coroner's jury, and I only remained long enough to hear the news."

"A coroner's jury!" repeated Mrs. Wilson. "Who is dead?"

"Joshua Wilkins, the conscript officer for this district, was shot in the road yesterday within a mile of his house. He was a bad man, engaged in a bad cause, a relentless executor of a merciless law, and few will mourn his death, though many will pity his family,"

"Who shot him, and what was it for?" asked Mrs. Wilson and Sophy, speaking eagerly and at once.

"As to what it was for, he has given cause enough to many a father in this county to take away his life. Who *did* shoot him is a mystery. No traces were discovered of his slayer. It is said, however, that the ball that killed

him must have come from a soldier's gun, as no rifle in this country would inflict such a wound."

A flood of light flashed upon Tobias Wilson. He remembered that, on the day before, Thomas Rogers, when starting to visit Colonel ——, had carried a Spencer rifle. He knew that by making a circuit of something more than two miles, he could have passed not far from the house of Wilkins. He recollected that the horse had the appearance of having been ridden hard on its return, and that Thomas himself seemed hurried and disturbed, and the conviction was forced upon him that that deed of blood lay at the door of his friend. He was now very anxious to return home, and only awaited the conclusion of Mr. Rogers's meal to do so. He sought an opportunity to whisper to Sophy: "I shall be back the day after to-morrow. Don't let them keep me in suspense any longer than that." Then mounting his horse, he rode as rapidly as the ground would permit to his own house.

He found Thomas Rogers sitting by the side of Sergeant Miller, in whom he appeared to take an interest for which Tobias Wilson could not account.

"Welcome home, Toby. I have worked a little in your crop to-day, though not a great deal. In truth, it does not need work as much as I thought when I told father I would remain here for awhile and help you."

Tobias returned his greeting, thanked him for what he had done, and added that the greater part of the crop would need no further work. The little that remained he could easily get through without assistance.

"But I must have an excuse for remaining here," answered Rogers, "and that is the best one I can find. So I shall even go out into the field and plow a few furrows occasionally, in order that I may say with truth that I am

helping you. Did you gather any news while you were gone?"

"Yes! I heard that Joshua Wilkins had been shot by some unknown person, and they were to-day holding a coroner's inquest over the body."

"A coroner's inquest! I thought that thing had been 'played out' in this latitude." Then he added bitterly, "Oh! I forgot that he was a conscript officer. If it had been you or me, they would have buried us like a dog, without troubling themselves to inquire who did the deed. It is a blessed thing to be a loyal citizen of the great and glorious Confederacy. What say you, sergeant."

"I can't say as I think so, sir:—unless it's a feller who's bound to go to hell any way. If he's young enough for a soldier, there's no telling what temptations to wickedness will be thrown in his way. If he's too old for that, they are certain to make him a hater and reviler and persecutor of his neighbor who don't happen to think exactly as he does. Now, there's Capt. Wilkins, who is said to have once been a good neighbor and a clever man, and yet he's brought tears enough into helpless eyes in the last two years to make a good sized-creek."

"He will never cause any more to flow," said Wilson, rising. "God forgive him the evil he has done."

The two friends went out to attend to the usual duties about the farm. When they returned, an ample supply of fuel was provided for the night's consumption, and a cheerful fire was soon blazing in both rooms of the cabin. Drawing his friend into the apartment where their conversation could not be overheard by Miller, Tobias entered upon the subject which, during the whole evening, had occupied the first place in his thoughts.

"I do not want your confidence, Thomas. Indeed, if what I suspect is true, I can serve you much better by re-

maining in ignorance of what you may have to tell. I can see dangers thickening around you, and it is of that I wish to speak. I am no soldier, but it is plain enough to me that in a few weeks the Union troops will be withdrawn from this vicinity to fight battles at Chattanooga. When that is done, you cannot doubt that there will be a rigid examination into the facts and circumstances connected with Joshua Wilkins's death. If you are once suspected, your fate is sealed; for they will require little proof to justify, in their opinion, the most rigorous measures against one who is known to entertain such decided Union sentiments. Have you thought of this, and adopted any plan for future security?"

"I have thought of it, certainly; but I have adopted no plan. First, because a great deal depends on circumstances hereafter to happen; and secondly, there is no need to be in a hurry. If the Union troops remain in this neighborhood for two weeks, and Colonel ——— gave it as his opinion that they would be here four weeks at least, I shall have time enough."

There was a pause of several minutes. At length Rogers asked:

"Did you not tell me that your grandfather, just before his death, contemplated raising a company of Union men for mutual defense, and that you had together sought and found a safe place for the concealment of arms and ammunition?"

"I did. I will show it to you to-morrow."

"It must be early, then. I must ride a good distance to-morrow. When are you and Sophy to be married?"

"I do not know. Your father and my mother are to settle it. I go over the day after to-morrow to receive my answer."

"I hope there will be no delay. When you are married,

you can take my place at home, and I will remain here to look after your affairs, until the dawning of a better day enables us to live in peace and security."

Whatever Wilson may have thought of this arrangement, he made no remark upon it. Reverting to the previous declaration of Rogers, that he had a long distance to ride on the next day, he inquired what it meant.

"I am going to Joshua Wilkins's funeral."

"You!" exclaimed Wilson in astonishment. "Are you mad? It is the worst secession nest in America. A band of conscript guards or guerrillas will no doubt be there. The best you can expect is to be conscripted, and taken off south of the Tennessee River."

"I shall not go alone. It is not yet eight o'clock. In an hour from this time the few citizens on the road to Colonel ———'s quarters will be asleep. By hard riding I can go there and return by one o'clock or before. I will arrange with him to send a company of cavalry to capture the funeral party, and I will cross the mountain by Jim Biles's house in time to have a hand in the skirmish, if there should be one. Parson Williams will be there, for there is no other Baptist minister living near enough to preach the funeral sermon. Jim Biles will also certainly be there. We may catch them both, and if we do, the proofs we can bring against them will not be treated as lightly by a Federal officer as by a Confederate jury."

Within the hour designated, Thomas Rogers was in the saddle, riding away from his friend's house; and Tobias Wilson went to bed with a lighter heart than he had expected would that night beat in his bosom. He thought he saw a fair prospect that the murderers of his grandfather would speedily be brought to justice, and his friend would thus be saved from imbruing his hands in more blood than he was persuaded already stained them. The feeling of

satisfaction which was diffused through his mind, had its effect upon the body also, and he sank into a deep and moveless sleep, which lasted until the return of Rogers, long after midnight.

Thomas Rogers exhibited no evidence of fatigue from his night's ride. He was quickly undressed, and merely remarking that everything had been arranged to his satisfaction, threw himself upon the bed and slept until daybreak.

The reader may as well be told at once that he had not dealt quite candidly with his friend. He had told him nothing that was not literally true,—he only concealed the fact that he was resolved Parson Williams should never be taken alive while he was by, with a rifle in his hand. He cared very little how Biles met his death, so he did meet it; but the parson he regarded as his own especial property, and could not bring himself to look upon his punishment by any one else with complacency. He saw no necessity for communicating this fact to Wilson, and allowed him to indulge whatever speculations he pleased without attempting to undeceive him.

CHAPTER VIII.

The young men whom we left sleeping at the end of the last chapter were astir with the first light of the morning. A few minutes only were devoted to the business of dressing themselves for the day. As soon as it was over, Rogers proposed that they should at once pay a visit to the place Mr. Johnson had selected for the concealment of arms and ammunition. Tobias led the way to the cave from which flowed the spring that formed the "branch" running by the house, and making its way out at the southern extremity of the valley. The mouth of the cave was a kind of low arch, formed of rugged stones, whose sharp edges jutted out from either side, and made deep seams in the roof. The cavity was nearly as high at the entrance as a man's head, but the whole width of the bottom was covered with water, and Rogers looked in vain for any mode of ingress. Upon the right-hand side there was a pile of loose stones. When these were removed, Rogers observed a narrow ledge of rock, some feet above the water, barely wide enough for the passage of one human body at a time.

"Follow me," said Wilson, stepping upon the ledge. "And look out that you don't break your head against the rocks above us, and take care of your footsteps, for this passage is by no means as smooth as a turnpike road."

In a few yards the cave widened considerably, and the roof was much higher. The rocky ledge gradually dipped down until it was lost in the more level surface of the bot-

tom of the cavern. The side along which they were groping their way, stumbling as they did so over huge stones, or slipping on their slimy surface, was of solid rock, indented here and there with vast crevices. Counting until he reached the fourth one of these crevices, Tobias Wilson stepped into it, and turning a sharp angle to the right, in a few steps they found themselves in a large and dry room. The materials for striking a light had been placed there by Mr. Johnson. These were found, and two candles lighted. Crossing to the opposite side they found an ascending entrance to another compartment, so low that they had to crawl on their hands and knees. The passage, however, was short, and they soon came to the inner side. This room was smaller than the one they had just left, but with a loftier ceiling. High up, apparently many hundred feet above their heads, they could see streaks of light, which no doubt came through crevices of the mountain. It was also evident that it must be tolerably well ventilated from some quarter, perhaps from similar crevices in the sides to those in the roof. The air was light and dry, and the candles slightly flickered as from the breath of a gentle breeze. Rogers observed the traces of a fire, and a quantity of wood piled on one side.

"My grandfather and I," said Wilson, "built that fire to see if the smoke would make its way out at any place which would betray the presence of human beings in here. We kept it burning for two days, but could not detect the escape of smoke anywhere. It must have gone straight up, and made its way out so slowly and in such small quantities, as not to be distinguishable from the vapor rising from the valley and setting on the mountain."

Rolling a large stone to one side, an aperture was visible, and bidding Rogers look in, he said:

"There you will find a place where you can stow away

thousands of muskets and as many pounds of powder and lead as you please, with little danger of discovery."

It was indeed a hiding-place not likely to be detected by any human scrutiny, and Thomas Rogers expressed himself decidedly to that effect. On his way back he made a careful survey of the room they had first entered, and taking the light with him in order to have a better view than that afforded by the glimmer from the mouth of the cave, he examined the crevices in the wall, noted their peculiar shape, and counted the number. His examination also extended to the great boulders over which they had stumbled in their entrance. Emerging once more into daylight, he said:

"I could find my way in and out now if I were blindfolded. Thank you, Toby. You have done me many a kindness; but this may prove the most valuable of all. Now let us go to the stable. My horse must be well rubbed and fed; he has a hard day's work before him."

"You had better take mine. Yours must have suffered from last night's ride."

"I did not ride him. I rode Miller's, and, by Jove, it has been a long time since I mounted such an animal!"

"From his own account, he had an excellent chance to pick a good one," answered Wilson dryly.

"Come, Toby, you must get over that prejudice. I owe Miller more than you dream of. He has given me information which I hope will enable me to clear these mountains of the robbers who infest them, and furnished me a clew to the doings of many a sneaking devil who now passes for a quiet and orderly citizen."

They entered the stable-yard as he spoke, and the subject was dropped for the present. Tobias went about his work directly after breakfast, and Rogers, seating himself by the side of Miller, had another long conference with the

wounded man. When that was ended, he mounted his horse, and rode through the field to the point at which Robert Johnson had been murdered, taking, as before, the rifle and accoutrements of Jenkins. As he rode near the place where Wilson was at work, he waved his hand and shouted:

"Look out for me by sundown."

Up the steep mountain path he urged his steed, until he came within a mile of Biles's house. Here he made a circuit, to avoid being seen at the house, and again "struck" the path far beyond the residence of that worthy. Looking at his watch, he found that it was just eleven o'clock.

"I shall have time enough," he thought; "they will hardly begin the funeral ceremonies before twelve o'clock, and my horse will walk the distance before that time. Come, Robin," he said, addressing the horse, and reining him down to a slower pace, "we'll take it leisurely now. It is probable you will need your wind before long."

Riding slowly down the mountain in the direction of Wilkins's house, he had not made more than half the distance, when he heard a horse's feet thundering up the stony path. Riding a little to one side and hitching his horse among some bushes, he returned to the path upon which the approaching horseman must soon make his appearance.

"Halt!" he shouted in a voice of thunder, when the fugitive had turned a corner of rock, and was within fifty yards of the place where he was standing. The horseman tried to rein up, but the speed at which he was going brought him within twenty feet of his challenger before he succeeded.

"What's your hurry this morning, Mr. Biles?" asked Rogers, while a baleful fire flashed from his eyes which boded no good to the wretch before him.

"The soldiers are after me."

"Indeed! and where may you have been to meet with the soldiers?"

"To Joshua Wilkins's funeral. We got a hint that a company of Yankees had left the camp before daylight this morning, and Parson Williams hurried on the funeral for fear we might be interrupted. The grave was hardly covered, when news came that the enemy were in less than three hundred yards. Captain ———'s rangers were formed behind the houses to stop the Yankees until the others got safely away."

"And what became of Parson Williams?"

"He went up the valley with a friend, and I reckon he's safe"

"God grant it!" muttered Rogers. Then in a louder tone went on with his questions.

"He is such a friend of yours, I should have thought he would have taken the direction of your house. When did he last sleep under your roof?"

This was a home thrust, and Biles turned deadly pale as he answered:

"I don't know exactly. It's been a good while."

"I think not. I think I met him coming from your house the day after Robert Johnson was murdered."

The terror which now shook the frame of the guilty criminal was pitiful to behold. He could not tell to what these questions pointed, but the tone and manner of the questioner were calculated to make him fear the worst. In public and in presence of his rebel friends, he would have braved it out manfully; but he was alone, alone with the memory of his crime and its avenger; and he cowered with an abject fear that awakened the deepest scorn of his enemy.

"I know all, Jim Biles," he continued. "You have nothing to tell me. I know where and when you plotted that

damnable murder. I know that Josh Wilkins and Ben Williams came to your house to carry it out; that Williams remained with you the night after it was done, and no doubt had family prayers, and thanked God that there was a Union man the less in this county. Oh! I can read it all. And now, sir, your time has come. Two days ago I sent Josh Wilkins to his long account. You will join him to-day. Parson Williams will soon follow. It would be a pity to separate such *lambs of God* for any length of time in the world to come."

"Spare me!" shrieked the craven-hearted villain. "For mercy's sake, spare me! I did not kill him; Parson Williams and Wilkins shot him. Indeed, indeed, I did not fire."

"I know you didn't; but it was because two bullets were enough to finish the work. If another had been needed, you were there to give it. You helped to drag him from his field, and it may have been your hand which felled him with that murderous club. Waste no time in prayers to me. I give you three minutes to utter one to your God. At the end of that time I shall fire."

The dastard, who had not hesitated to imbrue his hands in the blood of an old and peaceful man, for a mere difference of political opinion, now rolled down upon the mane of his horse in brutish terror,—sobbing, groaning, and vehemently protesting his innocence of any part in the last scene of the murder.

"Coward and dog, as well as murderer!" thundered Rogers with bitter contempt; "you have a gun,—use it."

"It aint loaded," groaned Biles. "I fired at the Yankees, and didn't have time to load."

"So much the worse for you. Two minutes of your time is gone."

Like lightning the idea flashed upon Biles that if he

could get back to the soldiers, his life at least would be saved. Gathering strength and resolution from this hope, he suddenly straightened himself in the saddle, wheeled his horse, and striking the spurs deep into his flanks, fled down the mountain at a pace dangerous alike to man and beast. Desperate as this attempt may seem, there was a fair chance for its success, unless the horse should stumble, and break its own or the rider's neck. The danger from this source was lessened in the present instance by the fact that Biles was riding a young horse which had been reared on the mountain, who had again and again traversed all its stony paths, and was as familiar with, and as much at home among them, as the Arab steed with the parched plains of the desert. Quick as had been his movements, they were not too quick for the keen eye that watched him. The goaded steed had made but little headway, when the rifle of Thomas Rogers rose to his shoulder. One moment he held it there, as firmly and steadily as if man and rifle were carved from the solid rock. Then a volume of smoke and flame belched from its muzzle, and a ringing report reverberated among the mountain crags. To all appearance Biles held his seat firmly. A few bounds of the horse carried him around the projecting crag before alluded to. Running rapidly to a point where he knew he could obtain another shot, and reloading his gun as he ran, Rogers muttered, "I couldn't have missed him. It is impossible!"

At the point for which he aimed he saw the horse, which, owing to the bends in the path, was still not more than a hundred yards from him, madly rushing down the mountain. The saddle was empty; the steed was riderless. "I thought so!" was the inward commentary of Rogers. "There would have been no excuse for missing a wild pigeon at that distance."

Leaning over the crag he saw the body of Biles, still alive, lying in the pathway. Scrambling down the cliff, he was soon standing by the prostrate form. It was evident that Jim Biles's lease of life was very near its end, but the ball had entered too low to cause immediate death. It might be several days before the spirit took its flight. With good care and nursing he would probably last a week. Thomas Rogers was much perplexed when he became satisfied of this fact. "If I leave him here," he thought, "and any of his friends should come this way, as is by no means unlikely, in their hasty flight from the Union cavalry, they will soon revive him enough to enable him to tell how he came by his death, and also who it was who cut short the career of that devil incarnate, Joshua Wilkins. If they do not find him, he will be torn to pieces by the wolves before morning, and thus perish as miserably as he deserves. If the fool hadn't tried to run, I do not believe I should have had the heart to shoot him. I reckon the fates had fixed it their own way, for he rushed upon his doom just when I was thinking of tying him and taking him down to Colonel ——, to dispose of as he thought best."

There was a momentary pause in his musings. He looked keenly down the mountain side, then placed his ear to the ground and listened attentively.

"It is nothing," he continued. "A sound from below will reach me long before any danger can approach. This wound troubles me; he will certainly revive before death; even now he is more stunned by his fall than paralyzed by the effects of my shot. It is hard to *finish* a man in this fix; and yet if I do not, I put my own life and that of my friends in fearful jeopardy. Well, as Parson Williams would say, 'I have put my hand to the plow and must not turn back.' I cannot leave him here alive. If Parson Williams was out of the way, I wouldn't care much how

soon the whole story was told. I could then go off with the Union army, and, if necessary, enlist in a cavalry company. But I will not leave here while there is a breath in his infernal carcass. Nor must I allow him a chance to be warned of his danger. The short and the long of it is, that I *must* put an end to Jim Biles. It's a bitter pill, but it has to be swallowed. Besides, when I undertook this job I had no right to expect smooth sailing all the time. I might have known that there would be things to be gone through as disagreeable as they were dangerous." So saying, he walked off eight or ten feet and raised his rifle to his shoulder, cocking it as he did so. In an instant he let it sink slowly down.

"No, that won't do. There is no prudence in making an unnecessary noise among these rocks, solitary as they seem. Nor will it do to use my knife. I shall be sure to get some of his poisonous blood upon me, and have to make up some lame tale to hoodwink Toby. This cliff will answer the purpose better."

Dragging the body to the brink of a precipice of more than fifty feet in height, he hurled it down, and walking away without casting one look at the mangled form, he mounted his horse and set out on his return. Giving his steed a loose rein, and allowing him to proceed at what gait he pleased, he continued the self-colloquy which was habitual to him.

"Things have not worked precisely to suit me to-day, though I have no great cause to grumble. If I had only got to Wilkins's in time to have sent a bullet after Parson Williams, I should have felt better. The scoundrel will smell a mouse now and keep close. It is true that a shadow of suspicion cannot attach to me, or to any one in particular. But the sudden and unexplained death of his two accomplices will blanch that hardened heart of his, and

his conscience will whisper that it has grown out of the murder in which he had so large a part. He will not show himself in a hurry, I'm thinking, if he can help it. I will have to change my tactics. It is certain that his ugly phiz won't be seen on this side of the mountain while there is a Union soldier in the neighborhood. I must wait and watch. May be Toby will bring some news to-morrow that will help me to a conclusion. Now, Robin," he continued, tightening the rein and touching his steed with the spur, "make tracks for home. Faster, sir, faster, my pet. There is work to be done when we get there, before the sun goes down."

Riding through the field, along the turning row, close to where his friend was at work, he called out: "Come, Toby, you have worked enough to-day. It is time to turn out. Come on to the house."

"You forget that I will lose a day to-morrow. I must stick to it to-day until the sun goes down."

"Never mind that! I will work for you to-morrow. Come on."

He did not wait for a reply, hardly pausing an instant before continuing on his way to the house. Arriving there he quickly stabled his horse; then, entering the room where Sergeant Miller was lying, he took down the rifle and accoutrements belonging to the wounded man, except the revolver, and immediately went out again, merely remarking to the sergeant, "I'll tell you what I have done when I come back." From the house he went directly to the cave, carrying the two Spencer rifles, ammunition, etc. with him. There was no hesitation in his movements; everything had been reflected upon and decided. The arms were safely hidden in the place pointed out by Wilson that morning; and with a satisfied expression upon his face, he emerged from the cave. He paused a minute by the pile

of loose stones near the entrance, as if hesitating whether to replace them. His decision was soon made.

"It isn't worth while. No one will ever suspect where that ledge leads. It looks as if a coon hadn't passed over it in a century; I rather think it is safest to leave it exposed. If anybody should get to tumbling these rocks about and find that the ledge was hidden by them, he might take it into his head to make further explorations. I don't think he would make any discoveries if he did, but there is no telling. Toby says he found it by accident, and he is sure no human being but Mr. Johnson ever knew it was there, until he showed it to me this morning. It is best to leave the stones where they are. I'll just throw a few of them into the spring, in little piles, to give them an appearance of having been put there as stepping stones to get to deeper water, and, by-the-way, I will hollow out a place to help on the deception."

Even while speaking he had begun his work. When it was completed to his satisfaction, he returned to the house and informed Miller that he had hidden the guns, etc., because he thought it possible the cabins might be searched, and if they were, the guns would surely be carried off. He gave no reason for his suspicion that a search might be instituted, and Miller asked for none—only saying:

"Wouldn't it be better to hide your rifles, and the revolvers too?"

"No; for everybody in this section knows that we have rifles, and never go from home without them. If they were missing it would create suspicion; they would hunt for them, and might find something more valuable, though I don't think that is probable—hardly possible. As for the revolvers, I *have hidden* one in my bosom," he said, opening his vest, and showing the weapon belted around him, underneath his outer garments; "and I want you to hide the other

under your pillow. It is a great convenience, in such times as these we live in, to have a friend like this always in reach."

"You were born for a partisan leader, sir. I wonder you never took to the trade."

"Well, I suppose it was partly because there was no such organization on *my side* of politics; partly because I had no wish to shed blood in this contest if I could help it, for I could never be certain how much of that same blood flowed in my mother's veins. As long as it was a free thing to fight or let it alone, as we pleased, I let it alone. But I am tired of dodging and hiding from conscript officers. If I must fight, I shall fight on my own side, and the chances are that I *shall be* a partisan leader before long. Would you like a commission under me as lieutenant?"

"Would I like it? Will a duck swim? or does a bear love honey? Give me the commission and you shan't want men."

"Get well then as soon as you can, and you shall have it. I hear Toby coming in from the field, and I must go now to help him feed the stock, and so on. The doctor too will be here directly. We will be alone to-morrow, and can have a long talk."

After a long and careful examination of his patient, the doctor expressed himself as delighted with his condition. He said that after the expiration of four days his symptoms were as favorable as those of many men would have been in four weeks. Fever gone, tongue clean, appetite good, pulse steady; nothing more was needed but to lie still, keep the leg easy, and let the bone go through the process of knitting. Youth, health, strength, and a remarkably good constitution had done a great deal, and the doctor modestly intimated that he might have done something himself toward bringing about the happy result; but after giv-

ing due weight to all these, the recuperative powers which had manifested themselves were wonderful. It was one of those extraordinary cases which medical science is at a loss to account for. The doctor, however, did not devote any long period of time to indulgence in the reflections and speculations to which the promising condition of his patient gave rise. Turning abruptly to Tobias Wilson, he inquired:

"Now, Toby, my boy, what do you intend to give me for supper? If your mother was here the question would be superfluous, but I don't know anything about your taste, or what attention you have paid to the provision of needful nourishment for the human body. What's your bill of fare to-night?"

"Well, my dear sir, I happen to know your taste, if you do not know mine, and, as you were kind enough to give me notice of your coming, I have made provision accordingly. I fear, however, that there will be no variety at breakfast; you must make out then with very nearly the same bill I offer you to-night. You shall have biscuit, hoe-cake, corn-batter cakes, coffee, milk, ham and eggs, dried venison, and chicken either broiled or fried, as you please. And, as you know everybody in these mountains is a cook, and I claim to be tolerably well skilled in that department of housekeeping, I hope to give you a meal of which you will have no cause to complain to my mother, when next you meet her."

"Your bill of fare is excellent, my boy; but I dissent *toto cœlo* from the proposition that everybody in these mountains is *a cook:* they think so, but it's not the fact. They have a barbarous and unhealthy way of cooking their bread over a blazing fire, and sending it to the table with the outside scorched brown and the inside little more than half done. They throw on the meats in the same way; keep them there

until all the juices are burned out, and call that cooking. Now, I have a weakness for good biscuit and fried chicken, and, if you have no objection, I will take that much of your culinary labors off your hands."

Wilson smiled; not at all surprised at the good doctor's speech, for this was notoriously his pet hobby. He had often heard it laughingly asserted, that the doctor frequently remained at the house of a patient to dinner, or other meal, as much for the purpose of lecturing the good wife upon cookery, as from any actual necessity for his attendance on the sick. As he was an excellent physician, a warm friend, a kind-hearted, generous, and benevolent man, this particular idiosyncrasy was not only tolerated, but had grown to be a kind of pleasure to his acquaintances and friends. It was therefore with a pleased and good-humored expression of countenance that Tobias answered:

"Certainly, sir. The dough is already made, and the chicken cut into pieces. Had you not better let me cook them, under your direction, of course?"

"Perhaps it would be better. My profession requires good eyes, and stooping over a hot fire is not the way to preserve them. Bring the dough; the biscuit require the longest time to get thoroughly done, and should be the first thing put on the fire."

The dough was brought; the doctor examined the mass, and directed it to be more thoroughly beaten.

"You can't make good biscuit without giving them a good beating. Remember that, Toby; it will be worth something to your wife, when you get one, which won't be long, I suppose, from what I witnessed the other day."

Tobias Wilson blushed deeply, and commenced beating the mass of dough with an energy which satisfied the doctor himself. His love was, in his eyes, a sacred thing, and he was not pleased by any seemingly careless allusion to it,

even when coming from so old and so good a friend as Dr. Griffin. Besides, Sergeant Miller was in the room, and though the allusion was too vague to afford him any clew to the real facts, Tobias had a nervous dread of the chance exposure of what was to him the "holy of holies," to the cold gaze, or, it might be, impertinent criticism of a stranger. He would, if he could, have confined all knowledge of it to his own bosom and to hers, until the very moment when they stood together before the altar, and the minister of God was there, to clasp the nuptial band and pronounce the nuptial benediction. He was a very miser in his love; and, like the miser, could gaze with passionate fondness upon his treasure in secret, and shudder to think that another eye could see, another hand could touch it.

The doctor, absorbed in the business before him, neither saw nor suspected the feelings he had unconsciously awakened in the bosom of his young friend. Thomas Rogers suspected that he was beating the dough to rags in pure mischief, and indulged a hearty laugh, when the doctor exclaimed:

"There, Toby! there, you foolish boy! if you strike another lick I'll turn you off as my assistant. Now," he continued, as Tobias ceased to pommel the harmless dough, "make it up into biscuits, and put them in the oven; then bring me the frying-pan."

The frying-pan and the plate of chicken were handed to him; a dish of dry flour, a plate of butter, a bowl of sweet cream, and some hog's lard were also placed on a bench where he could reach them.

"Take away the lard," he almost shrieked. "A piece as big as a pea would ruin the flavor of this delicate bird. Bring me some water instead, and you may go on with the preparation of the other things. I will attend to the

chicken myself. You see, Thomas, frying a young chicken exactly as it should be done, is one of the most difficult things in the whole system of cookery."

"Why," replied Rogers, "I always thought it was one of the simplest and easiest."

"That is a proof, young man, of lamentable ignorance on your part of the most useful because the most healthful of the arts. Now observe me, and after the bird is cooked I shall expect you to give me your honest opinion. In the first place, you see I fill this frying-pan half full of water. Be pleased to hold it on the fire until it boils well. The next thing is to see that it is salted exactly right. Most people think that makes no difference, as you can salt it when it comes on the table. That's a great mistake, Tommy; it must be cooked with the right quantity in it."

After satisfying himself upon this important point, he continued:

"When the water boils well in the frying-pan, you put in a lump of butter not quite as large as a hen egg,—let that melt thoroughly; then cover each piece of chicken thickly with dry flour, and put it into the pan. Put the pan back on the fire, and let it remain until the chicken is half done. Take it off, turn the pieces of chicken over, pour in a cupful of cream and let it stay until it is done, and you have a dish as delicious as any that was ever served up on the table of the Queen of England."*

To judge from the repeated assaults upon the viands before them, the supper was altogether to the taste of the

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* The author once heard this dissertation upon the proper method of frying a young chicken, almost *verbatim* as it is here given. The place, too, was very near the spot where the principal scenes of this story are laid. He confesses, however, that he has never taken interest enough in the science of good eating, to make an actual experiment of its virtues.

parties whom it concerned; not excepting the wounded sergeant, than whom none seemed to enjoy his share with a keener relish.

Some time after the conclusion of the meal, Thomas Rogers announced his purpose to sleep in the room with Miller. He also said that he wished to send a note to his father, and, as Tobias and Dr. Griffin would probably make an early start in the morning, he would write it that night.

The next morning when Tobias Wilson was about to set out to hear the final decision of those to whom the question of his immediate marriage had been referred, a letter was placed in his hand by his friend, directed to Thomas Rogers, Sr., with an injunction to place it in his hands immediately on arriving at his house.

"Tell him," added Rogers, "that I wish him to read this before giving you your answer. I do not know why, but I have a presentiment that they will try to put you off. Don't listen to anything until he has read this letter; and if he still wishes to delay your marriage, don't let him do it. Stand up stoutly, and if you will whisper a word to Sophy, she'll help you. He can't refuse her anything."

Wilson did not feel quite confident of getting any help from Sophy; but he rode away fully resolved to follow his friend's advice, and, in case of need, to make an earnest appeal to his elected bride. He was certain of a powerful ally in her own heart, and did not allow himself to be much alarmed by anticipations of the probable triumph of mere notions of expediency, over the pleadings of his love, aided by the suggestions of her own. He lost no time in delivering his letter to Mr. Rogers, and then quietly slipped away to whisper something to Sophy which made her cheek burn, but which, from the satisfied expression on his own countenance, had clearly elicited no unfavorable response.

Mr. Rogers read the letter, and walking apart with Mrs. Wilson, handed it to her. It ran as follows:

My dear Father:—

Tobias tells me that it has been left to his mother and yourself to fix the period of his marriage with my sister. After the public avowal of their love, at the funeral of Mr. Johnson, it seems to me that propriety requires that there should be no delay. But that is a matter of which you are a better judge than I am. What I wish to say is, that I have it much at heart that the wedding should take place as early as possible. I have sure information that the Union troops will be withdrawn from this county in a few weeks. I shall probably be compelled to go with them, and you will need some one to take my place at home. Give Toby that right. As the husband of your daughter, his proper place, in seasons of trouble and peril, will be by your side. Such times will soon be upon us, and it will be a source of comfort to me, in my absence, to know that a strong hand, a quick eye, and a fearless heart will be here to watch with you over Sophy and the little ones.

Even if I do not go off with the Union soldiers, I cannot stay at your house. It would be certain to bring more or less trouble upon you; and if Gen. Rosecrans should be repulsed at Chattanooga, the fact that you had given shelter to an avowed traitor to the South, will be used by the authorities as an excuse for oppressing you, and will justify in the eyes of each petty guerrilla chief, any outrage he may choose to commit.

I learn from the wounded man you saw at Toby's house, that you are already marked; but I have good reasons for believing that you will find friends where you least expect them. Still they might happen to be out of the way, and I shall feel easier from knowing that Toby is with you. Let

the wedding take place in a week at farthest. I will come over then and let you know where and how you can communicate with me in future.

When Mrs. Wilson had read this letter, Mr. Rogers asked gravely:

"What say you, madam? Shall we change our decision?"

"He is deeply in earnest," answered Mrs. Wilson, "and I think I can discover that he has more reasons for his request than he has chosen to give. The delay of a month, which we had proposed, was merely to enable your daughter to make suitable preparations. There was no real necessity for it. Perhaps the best way will be to read her brother's letter to her, and tell her that although we had decided to postpone the marriage, we are not now inclined to interfere. That she must fix the day herself."

This proposition having been assented to, they handed the letter to the lovers, and briefly stated the conclusion to which they had come. Sophy Rogers read it twice, and then asked:

"Do you know what is in this letter, Toby?"

"No. He did not seal it; but he did not tell me to read it. Perhaps he never thought of it."

She handed it to him in silence; walked to the window, and leaned her head against it in deep thought. She was recalled by her father's voice, inquiring:

"Well, my daughter, what do you say?"

She did not answer, but turning at once and approaching her lover, she placed her lovely hand in his, and whispered:

"It is yours now, Toby; but tell them yourself when you wish to claim it at the marriage altar."

Standing in that presence, he could indulge no outward

manifestation of the rapture which glowed within; but there was in every feature a visible manifestation that the words which fell softly upon his ear, and sunk into his heart, were more precious and more durable than if written with a diamond pen upon tablets of gold.

"Shall I say Sunday next?" he inquired in a voice as low as her own.

"Any day," she answered, burying her face in his bosom.

And so it was settled that on the following Sunday Tobias Wilson should become the happy husband of the loveliest woman whose footsteps had ever pressed the soil of Alabama, or, as he believed, the surface of the earth.

Greetings and congratulations were exchanged among members of that little circle, and then the letter of Thomas Rogers was again referred to. "There is something behind." "He means more than he says." "What can it be?" were exclamations of all present *but one.* That one understood it full well, and even amid the happiness which settled like a glory around his soul, there was a sad presentiment of approaching evil. He shuddered as he reflected that however he had since endeavored to dissuade his bold, manly, and true-hearted friend, from the undertaking in which he had already made one bloody step,—he knew nothing of the death of Biles,—it was nevertheless his suggestion that had first pointed it out to that strong mind and stubborn will. It had gone so far, that revealment would only bring added grief to those he loved, and he was forced to content himself with the firm resolution to share all the consequences that might follow.

When about taking his leave that evening, Wilson was informed by his mother that his presence would be dispensed with until Sunday. They had a great deal to do, she said, in the three days which intervened, and did not

wish to be disturbed in their occupations. He pleaded for *one* visit, *just one*, but in vain. She was inexorable. Arriving at home, he grasped the hand of his friend, and exclaimed:

"Give me joy, my dear fellow. Your letter acted like a charm. They were about to put me off a month, as if times were likely to be more peaceful then than now. But when they read your letter, it was agreed that the wedding might take place next Sunday."

"Next Sunday!" repeated Rogers, musingly. "Next Sunday, and this is Wednesday night! It is sooner than I expected. I thought they would give you a week of purgatory at least. You are a happy man, Toby. I need not offer you my congratulations. You know how much I wish you joy, and how willingly I give up my sister to one who I am certain would rather break his own neck, than the least of the promises he makes to her before the marriage altar."

Throughout the remainder of that afternoon and evening Thomas Rogers was thoughtful and reserved. When alone, his old habit of *thinking aloud* asserted its predominance. "They have not yet heard of Biles's death over the mountain, or Toby would have said something about it. It may be several days yet, before his body is discovered. If it was not for his wife's missing him, and getting up a search, he might never be found in that lonely place. When he *is found*, the immediate conclusion will be, that he was killed by the Union soldiers, by whom the funeral was broken up, and no investigation will follow. It is safe to say that matter is ended. Parson Williams's turn comes next. The worst and the most dangerous of the three. But how am I to get at him? I thought I would get it fixed somehow when I went over to Toby's wedding; but Sunday is a bad day to catch him alone. Never

mind, 'where there is a will, there is a way,' and I don't think another week will go over his head, before I make a hole in his cursed hide. He must be put out of the way before I leave here, or I may come back to find my father in his grave, and his house a heap of ashes."

The next day and the next, this musing mood continued. He went early to work in the field, and seemed glad of any occupation which precluded lengthened conversations with his friend. Saturday there was a change. His resolution had been taken, and the sunshine had returned. He spoke with high good humor of the morrow's transformation of his friend into the staid and sober head of a family. Altogether he seemed quite as well pleased as Wilson himself at the nearness of the bridal hour, and exhibited throughout the day even more than his usual exuberance of spirits.

It was Saturday night. The last of his bachelor days had passed away, and Tobias Wilson early sought his couch. When he had retired to his room, Thomas Rogers moved his seat nearer to the bed of Miller, and asked:

"Are you well enough to get along one night without me?"

"Oh! yes; if you have anything particular to keep you away. Put some victuals and a bucket of water on the bench here by me, and I shall do well enough."

"I don't like to leave you alone, but I must stay away from you to-morrow night. Perhaps Dr. Griffin may come. Send him a message by Toby that you are very anxious to see him."

"Won't you see him and can't you tell him?"

"I *shall* see him, and I *can* tell him. But I want Toby to carry the message from you. I shall have something to say to him myself, after Toby has told him you want him."

"But, sir, Mr. Wilson knows that I am doing as well as I can do, and if he tells the doctor that, he will not come."

"That might be, sure enough! Well, then, get worse to-night; have the nightmare; wake up with a terrible pain in your shoulder, and your leg feeling as if it would drop off. Toby will take it all for Gospel, and report it to Dr. Griffin just as you tell him. A child could cheat him out of his eyes now. Do you understand me?"

"Certainly, sir! I see it all plain. I told you that you *wur* born for a partisan leader, and the more I sees of you the more I'm satisfied I was right."

And the two men, whose acquaintance had begun by a mutual attempt at destruction, but who, in a few days, had become fast friends, closed their eyes in sleep, side by side, with their several parts already committed for the play of the morning.

The bright rays of the sun had already tinged with their golden light the loftiest of the mountain peaks, when the two friends, Tobias Wilson and Thomas Rogers, set out for the home which one of them did not expect to visit for many a long and weary day. The knowledge of what he had done, and of what he meant to do, was confined to his own bosom, and dark as were his thoughts and his future purposes, no trace of doubt or gloom could be noted on his brow.

It had been arranged that the ceremony should take place at noon, on the —— day of August, 1863, at the house of Mr. Rogers. A few friends of the family only had been invited. In truth, there were but few in that vicinity who could have been induced to show themselves at the house of a known Union man and supporter of the Government against the unholy rebellion which then desolated the land, and watered it with the tears of bereaved mothers and sorrowing sisters. The soldier who came only for the purpose of sustaining the majesty of the law, and maintaining unimpaired the rich heritage bequeathed by our

ancestors, was denounced as a brutal invader; and the citizen who asked for no higher privilege than that of remaining at home, and withholding himself from active participation in the unnatural conflict, in which nearly every drop of blood that stained the ground was drawn by a brother's hand from a brother's veins, was shunned by his former friends and branded as a coward, or a traitor to the land of his nativity. The foundations of the social system had been broken up. Father and son met upon the public highway as strangers. No prayer ascended to heaven from a sister's lips for a brother whose judgment led him to espouse a cause she had tutored herself to hate. Even the yearnings of a mother's love sickened and died in the deadly malaria of rebellion, and the poor boy who could not understand why he should not love his whole country instead of contracting his affections within narrow and imaginary lines, went away to the discharge of his duty without her blessing, and felt thankful when her lips refused to utter the curse the demon had suggested to her heart. Love, friendship, natural affection, kindness, toleration, and charity, all died in that baleful atmosphere, and he who refused to become a traitor had only the alternative of becoming an outcast,—shunned like the leper of old, or hunted down with the bitter and remorseless venom which is always the characteristic of WRONG in morals, in politics, and in religion. Mr. Rogers, and every member of his family, were firmly and faithfully attached to the Union. To him it made no difference whether a man's eyes had first opened to the light of day in Massachusetts or in South Carolina. Neither the one nor the other, by itself, was his country, and both were alike parts of that great Republic to which alone he acknowledged his allegiance was due. Entertaining such opinions, and expressing them without reserve, the circle of his associates in that latitude was soon contracted

within very narrow limits. Most of these had assembled on the present occasion to witness the marriage of his daughter. But not a single secessionist could be brought to honor the house of a "Southern Tory," by breaking bread beneath its roof. Mr. Rogers noted the fact with a smile of contempt. His son noted it with an angry frown which not long afterward brought forth bitter fruit. Oh! how prone are we to forget in the vanity of present power that the persecuted victim may in time be transformed into a judge, and the stern sentence of our own guilt be pronounced by lips to whose humble pleadings we have scorned to listen!

A table had been placed in the middle of the passage, upon the rich covering of which lay a single volume containing the marriage ceremony according to the forms prescribed by the Methodist Episcopal Church. The minister was preparing to take his place by this unpretending altar when the bugle notes of a cavalry troop rose full and clear upon the air. When these had died away, the steady tramp of horses in a leisurely walk succeeded, and then a small body of cavalry, commanded by a captain and one lieutenant, came up the road which ran along in front of Mr. Rogers's house. It was a body of Union troops, returning from a scouting expedition. The officers were known to Thomas Rogers, and he went out to greet and invite them to halt and witness the marriage of his sister. The invitation was cordially given, and cheerfully accepted. A guard was placed over the horses. The officers entered the house, and the soldiers gathered about the entrance to the passage where they would have a full view of the parties to a ceremony which is always interesting, and doubly so in seasons of trial and of danger.

Sophy Rogers was dressed in pure white, unadorned save by a single rose-bud fastened to the bosom of her dress. A

long, rich veil was thrown over her head, and hung loosely about her shoulders, but it was drawn partially away from her face, so as to hide but little of the loveliness which glowed and sparkled there. There was joy in her countenance, subdued indeed by the consciousness of the high responsibility she was about to assume, but still a joy which she did not attempt to conceal. When the minister had propounded the usual questions to the husband, and turned to her with the solemn inquiries which it was requisite for her to answer, she raised her eyes, beaming with unutterable love and trust and confidence, to the face of her lover, already half husband, and gave the affirmative response in a voice which was low indeed, but clear, distinct, and sweet as the choral song that gladdened the union of our first parents in the Garden of Eden. Up to this moment, from the time she emerged from her own room to the passage in which the ceremony was performed, her face had drooped toward her bosom; and though partially prepared by the extraordinary symmetry of her form, and the grace of every movement, Captain —— was absolutely startled by the vision of beauty that burst upon him. When the ceremony ended, he claimed an introduction to the bride. Bowing with perfect courtesy, though with undisguised admiration, he addressed her in words to which his voice and manner imparted a touch of sadness.

"The good wishes and the congratulations of a stranger must be indifferent to you, and I am sure that you will pardon me for reserving mine until I have the pleasure of shaking your husband by the hand."

"You are mistaken, sir! The good wishes of a soldier who wears the uniform of my country, and is daily exposing his life in its defense, can never be indifferent to me."

"Indeed!" he replied, slowly and musingly; "is it indeed so? Lady, our cause is blessed!"

Then seeing her turn toward her husband as if to introduce him, he added frankly, at the same time extending his hand, "I do not need an introduction to Mr. Wilson, and I trust the name of Captain ——, of the —— Cavalry, is not altogether unknown to him."

Tobias Wilson grasped the extended hand, and expressed his high gratification at making the personal acquaintance of an officer whose uniform kindness and gentlemanly bearing had wrung reluctant praises even from secession lips.

On such occasions, conversation with the principal personages is necessarily limited, and though the present company held aloof, and seemed disposed to allow the soldier all the time he wished, he had too much good taste to avail himself of the privilege which was thus tacitly accorded to him. "Before I go," he remarked, "you must allow me to introduce my lieutenant;" and, beckoning the young officer to his side, presented him in form. Allowing only a brief space of time for their mutual salutations, he said: "We must ride, Mr. ———. It will be late before we reach the camp." Turning to the young bride, he continued: "We have now only to beg a slice of the wedding-cake, cut with your own fair hands, and we will place it beneath our heads in the rude tent which is the soldier's only home, in the fond hope that there is some foundation for an old superstition, and that our dreams may recall a loveliness akin to that which has enchanted us to-day."

When the officers took their departure, Sophy and her brother walked with them to the entrance, where the soldiers were still clustered exchanging remarks and making occasional inquiries of the male guests who attended the bridal. She had suffered the veil to fall entirely from her head, and stood before the war-worn veterans in all the radiant beauty with which an Eastern fancy clothed the houris of Mahomet. Instantly lifting their caps and waving them in the air, they

greeted her with cheers as loud and as enthusiastic as ever rung over a battle-field, where freedom had won a victory over anarchy.

"That is right, my men," cried the captain, raising his own cap upon the point of his sword; "and if a time should ever come when she needs a soldier's help, every heart among us will pour out its last drop in her defense. Now, one cheer for the bridegroom; one more and a rousing one for the bride, and then we will say farewell."

The cheers were given with hearty good-will, and the troop rode away, with the lieutenant at their head; the captain remaining for some time in earnest conference with Thomas Rogers.

The dinner which followed, though rich and abundant, was as simple and unostentatious as the wedding that preceded it. Yet there was joy in the hearts of all those who that day seated themselves around Mr. Rogers's hospitable board. Yea, of all; not excepting that one whose thoughts might have been presumed to partake of the character of the fierce and bloody deeds in which he had lately been an actor, and of those that were yet to come. His vow had been fulfilled in part, but only in part. There was still something to be done. The time had not come for reflection to sting the mind with doubt, and give a darker name to acts that now wore the semblance of duty, and appeared to spring from the dictates of self-defense. On that bright day no shadow darkened his heart; perhaps he was the most jubilant of the party. To his mind there was no cause for gloom or apprehension. He loved his sister dearly, and was warmly attached to the man who had now the right to call her WIFE! They were happy in each other's love, and he rejoiced that it was so. Besides, he believed that the event which had been that day consummated, would facilitate the execution of the schemes that

had found a lodgment in his brain. He saw no reason, therefore, why he should not enjoy himself to the full; and he did enjoy himself, although fully resolved that when he left that festal scene, it should be to visit one where Death was "master of the revels!"

About the middle of the afternoon Dr. Griffin announced to Mr. Rogers, with evident chagrin, that it was necessary, from the reports of Tobias Wilson and Thomas Rogers, that he should pass the night with the wounded sergeant. A half hour later, Thomas suddenly recollected that it would be unkind to leave the doctor alone with his patient, and he too rode away. Gradually the company dispersed, until only a few young persons remained, besides the usual members of the family. How the remainder of that afternoon and evening and night wore away, the reader must imagine. Upon those first hours of sacred wedded love we dare not intrude. Those who have passed through them will understand the burning intensity of that enjoyment which condenses into moments the raptures of a lifetime; and those who have not, must live on in ignorance, until experience reveals what language is powerless to portray.

It was near the hour of noon on the next day when Dr. Griffin returned. He seemed perplexed and uneasy, and even forgot to give Mrs. Wilson instructions as to the proper mode of preparing the viands he had come to share. He was crusty and uncommunicative, and finally picked up a book, and, stretching himself on a wooden bench in the passage, was soon seemingly absorbed in its contents. Not long afterward a neighbor, who had been absent for some days, came to pay his respects and offer his congratulations to the newly-married pair. Several others had called during the morning, and as all who did so had been invited to remain and partake of the family dinner, and as most of them had accepted the invitation, these, added to the young peo-

ple of both sexes who were present at the wedding, and had not returned home with their parents on the previous day, made up a very respectable auditory for a newsmonger, of which fraternity Mr. Jones—the new-comer—was a zealous member. Some of the company were seated on the steps of the passage entrance; some were lolling on the benches; while others had paired off to indulge those little flirtations of which weddings are so apt to be suggestive. Seating himself in a chair, Mr. Jones addressed Mrs. Wilson, Sr., in a voice loud enough to be heard by the whole party:

"Have you heard the dreadful news this morning, madam?"

"What news?" "What is dreadful?" "Do tell us quick!" were some of the questions and exclamations which sounded in the gratified ears of Mr. Jones. Mrs. Wilson calmly answered:

"It cannot be anything very dreadful, or some of us must have heard it. Some of our friends would have called to tell us."

"Oh! yes, it is, dear madam," exclaimed a bright-eyed, laughing girl, who had not yet seen seventeen summers. "It's horrid! I heard it yesterday."

"You heard it!" exclaimed Jones nervously, fearful that some one had been before him in communicating a terrible story. "But you couldn't have heard it all, for some of it didn't happen until this morning. What did you hear, Miss Ella?"

The young girl, who had not one particle of faith in Mr. Jones's story, and who had seized on this occasion as a good opportunity to pay a little debt of spite she owed him, answered:

"I do not know whether my news is the same as yours, Mr. Jones; but mine is so horrid that I'm sure you will never be able to match it. Can he, Mrs. Wilson?"

"Really, Ella, you cannot expect me to answer that question until I know what your news is."

"Well, then, I heard yesterday that Mr. Jones had told his friend, Mrs. Austin, as a great secret, who told it again, as a secret, to every one within ten miles of her house, that I had promised to marry his nephew, Joe Sykes—a long-legged, bandy-shanked, blear-eyed, spider-bodied toad as he is! Now is that not more dreadful than any news he can tell?"

Mrs. Rogers smiled gravely at this sally, and the young people laughed heartily at a description they all knew was not greatly over-drawn. All of which only served to increase and intensify Mr. Jones's anger.

"You are likely to do a great deal worse, Miss Ella Whitlock, than get my nephew for a husband. He has already got a captain's commission in the Confederate army, and is able to protect those he loves, and punish such as take advantage of his absence to turn him into ridicule!"

The young girl, notwithstanding the bitterness of her words, had heretofore spoken without an apparent trace of anger. At this unmanly threat, her eyes flashed fire, and her dimpled cheek grew scarlet.

"Punish a helpless girl! That would be just like him! The uncle is only a slanderer; but the blood grows warmer in its descent, and the nephew rises to the dignity of making war upon women! I do not doubt that he has courage enough for that, although he did, in company with his popinjay general, Joe Wheeler, drown his horse in jumping from the Shelbyville bridge, and lose his hat and his sword in the water, in his terrified flight from the Union cavalry. I wonder if that is any part of the crown of glory he told me he was going to win, and bring back to lay at my feet!"

"Stop, Ella," said Mrs. Wilson, who thought it time this scene should end. "Such language is unbecoming."

"I couldn't help it," cried the maiden, bursting into tears. "I did not mean to say all I have said. But it's true, and I will say it to Joe Sykes if he wishes to hear it."

If Thomas Rogers had been there, Mr. Jones's bones would have been in considerable peril, and Captain Joseph Sykes would have had an item charged in his account which might prove troublesome when the day of settlement came; for Rogers loved that bright-eyed and impetuous girl more than he cared as yet to confess to his own heart, and it was altogether possible that he might conclude that every tear drawn from her eyes called for as many crimson drops from the veins of the offender. There were those present also whose tempers had been sorely tried; but Mr. Jones was an old man, and they reflected that he was a guest, albeit not a very welcome one, in the house of a friend. Ella Whitlock walked into an adjoining room when she had done speaking, and Mrs. Wilson, anxious to remove any feeling of unpleasantness at such a time, urged Mr. Jones to go on with his news. He needed no further encouragement, and his hearers were treated to a dark story, for which they were little prepared.

He told how, in passing the house of Parson Williams that morning, he observed a number of persons so great as to excite his curiosity; that he stopped to inquire what it meant, when he was told that on Saturday a party who were in search of Jim Biles, found his dead body at the foot of a precipice; that it was so dreadfully mangled by falling from the precipice and by the teeth of some wild animal, they did not at first discover that he had been shot —the ball entering his back and coming out in front, after passing through the lower bowels; that the conscript sur-

geon who examined the wound declared it had been inflicted by the same kind of gun as that which killed Joshua Wilkins; that Parson Williams had been so much affected by the death of his friend that he was unable to go through with the usual services of the church on Sunday; that after a restless night he went out this morning, according to his custom, to feed his hogs; that the hog pen was not more than three hundred yards from the house; that not returning to breakfast, the family became uneasy and instituted a search. They found him lying on the ground, near the hog-pen, stone dead; his loaded gun resting against a tree not far off; and, strange to say, the wound through which his life-blood had ebbed, was of the same character as those that had sent his friends upon the dread journey, which leads from earth to—where we know not.

All of the company had listened in profound silence to this fearful narrative. Sophy turned pale, and clung tremblingly to the arm of her husband, while he was visibly agitated; a cloud gathered on the brow of Mr. Rogers; Mrs. Wilson wept; and Ella, who had returned to the passage as soon as the traces of tears were removed from her cheeks, wrung her hands, and bitterly reproached herself.

"To think," she murmured, "just to think that I should have made so light of this dreadful business, and interrupted its narrative by my foolish resentment of Joe Sykes's pretended engagement to me, and still more foolish anger when rebuked! If the Lord will forgive me, I will not again be so wicked. Mr. Jones, I beg your pardon; come, let us be friends."

He took her offered hand, but it was after the surly manner of a half-appeased bear.

Mr. Rogers cut short the scene, and, at the same time, changed the conversation by announcing, almost sternly, that dinner was waiting. At this announcement, they re-

paired to the dining-room, and no further allusion was made to the sad occurrences that had been related by Mr. Jones. But a feeling of sadness and gloom had settled on entertainers and guests alike; and soon after the meal was concluded, there was a general breaking up of the party. There were no light adieus, in which gayety predominated over the acheless regret of parting for a short time from the friends whose happiness they had assembled to witness, and of whose hospitality they had liberally partaken. The collision of a wedding and a funeral is always painful; but there was a deeper shadow than this upon the hearts of the party—just now so gay—who were hurrying to their respective homes. There was an unaccountable sensation of mingled awe and apprehension. They had been taught the forceful lesson, that "in the midst of life we are in death," in a manner so rude that the nerves gave way, and the mind was unstrung by the shock. Their interest in the young and loving couple was tinged with sadness, and they went on their way, hoping that no evil might come, yet dreading its approach to themselves, or to those who had dedicated their lives to each other, and who, in the eyes of God, were henceforth one and indivisible. The laws of man might undertake to absolve them from the promises they had made to each other, but a higher and a holier law proclaimed that death alone had power to release them. For weal or for woe, in joy or in sorrow, in sickness or in health, they were joined together, and the sentence of perjury must follow in the footsteps of a broken faith, if one of those promises should be violated either with or without the sanction of human law.

When the last of the guests had departed, the young wife leaned upon her husband's arm; there was a shade upon her brow, and her eyes of heavenly blue were robbed of a portion of their luster, but the love that filled her soul,

and gave life to the pulses of her heart, bid defiance to trouble and anxiety.

"This is a sad beginning of our wedded life," she murmured, laying her hand upon her breast, "but I will not let the dark omen hide a single ray of the happiness which is glowing here."

"The heart, sweet wife, makes its own omens. All others are worse than worthless. And in our hearts I know that all is gladness."

He folded her in his arms as he spoke, and pressed a long, long kiss upon her lips. When at last that clinging salute had ended, the light returned to her eyes, and with firm unwavering faith and trustfulness, she repeated the words:

"GOD'S WILL BE DONE. I TRUST IN HIM!"

CHAPTER IX.

When Thomas Rogers left his father's house, on the afternoon of his sister's wedding, it was with the avowed purpose of returning to that of Tobias Wilson, whither Dr. Griffin had preceded him.

"You had better ride fast," said his father, when they shook hands at parting. "You are late, and scrambling down that mountain after nightfall is not the safest thing in the world for man or horse."

"I have time enough," he replied, patting his spirited horse on the neck. "Robin has a knack of reducing these mountain miles to short measure, and he has never tripped since you gave him to me."

The words had scarcely passed his lips when he gave his steed the reins, and rode off at a gallop. At a distance of less than a mile he dismounted, laid down the rails of a worm-fence, and led his horse inside. There was here a thick undergrowth of bushes, and a few yards off a large poplar-tree had been blown down by some previous storm. From the hollow of this tree he drew forth the Spencer rifle, revolver, Bowie knife, and other accoutrements he had hidden there that morning on his way to the wedding. To Wilson, who was present when they were hidden, he had merely observed, that if he carried these formidable weapons to his father's house, it would excite remark among the guests, and it was therefore better to leave them where he could get them on his return. The knife and pistol were now belted around his person. The bul-

let pouch, in which there was a supply of cartridges, done up in papers containing seven rounds each, (the full charge for a Spencer rifle,) was thrown over his shoulder, and then, remounting his horse, he turned his head directly through the field of waving corn.

From this point it was about four miles to the house of Parson Williams. In order to reach it, it was necessary to pass through a gap in the mountain, some three-quarters of a mile in extent, on one side of which a perpendicular wall of rock rose up to the height of three or four hundred feet, on the other there was a like precipice, of even greater height, but not so regular. Here and there a jutting crag overhung the road which ran along its base. There were, too, occasional clefts, large enough to hide a man and horse, from more than one of which issued limpid springs that emptied themselves into the stream which ran through and spread itself over nearly half the width of the gap. There was no other outlet to the valley in which Parson Williams lived, without making a circuit of twenty miles or more. At this point Thomas Rogers calculated that there was danger of meeting people whom he had no mind to take into his confidence, or supply with grounds of suspicion hereafter. Before reaching it, he turned aside into one of the numerous hollows of the mountain, tied his horse securely to the limb of a tree, and stretched himself upon the ground, where he could overlook the road, without being seen himself, prepared to wait until night gave assurance that no traveler or passer-by would be stirring on that dark and lonely road. He saw several persons riding along from the direction of Parson Williams's house, and, recognizing them as members of the Baptist church, he concluded they had been in attendance at one of the Parson's "preachings." Just after sundown he heard a clear, shrill whistle, piping the favorite negro melody,

"Possum up de gum stump,
Raccoon in de hollow,"

and looking over the rock, which served him as a screen, he saw a stalwart negro, the property of Parson Williams, leisurely making his way homeward. The negro was well known to Rogers, and he instantly called out:

"Here, Isham. Come this way."

"Who dar?" answered the negro, looking up, and then satisfied by the first glance, hasty as it was, he continued: "Oh! Massa Rogers. Yes, sa."

When he reached the rock which had served Rogers as a hiding-place, he was told to seat himself behind it; and the following colloquy ensued:

"How is your master, Isham?"

"Poorly, sa. Mighty poorly! He took on a heap when Cappin Wilkins was killed, and said one of the Lord's wessels wur smashed into shivers; and he got a big skeer when he went over to preach the funeral. He said that onct he was sartin sure he wur in the hands of the Philis*tines*, but the Lord delivered him. But yis*ter*-day, when he heerd how Massa Biles was found dead, with a bullet hole spang through him, he was awful troubled; and this mornin' it wur gin out that he was too low in sperit to preach to-day."

"Too low in spirit to preach to-day! Why, I saw some of the congregation coming away, not an hour ago."

"Yes, sa. I met 'em. But thar warnt no preachment. They stayed may be to keep him company, or may be to git a little of his old peach and honey."

"Like enough," responded Rogers, musingly. Then changing his tone, and looking the negro steadily in the face, he said:

"Isham, if all the reports we hear in our neighborhood be true, you have no cause to love your master much."

"What you hear, sa?" asked the negro quickly, wincing under the keen gaze that was bent upon him. "You hear Isham gwine to run off wid de Yankees?"

"No, I did not hear that, and I should not have told it if I had. So you need not be afraid to tell me anything. What I did hear was that Parson Williams treated his servants badly; that although he gave them good clothes and a sufficiency of food, he whipped them unmercifully for the least fault, and made even the women and children work before day, and after dark, in the worst weather. I therefore concluded that you do not love him much."

"Massa Rogers, is you in yearnest, or is you foolin' dis nigger?"

"I was never more in earnest in my life, Isham. It would do me no good to fool you, or to betray you, and thus cause your punishment. You are not more than three or four years older than I am, and we have been raised here together. Did you ever know me to tell anything on anybody that would hurt them; especially on a negro who has no friends to take up for him?"

A light shone upon the countenance of the negro, which betokened not merely assent, but implicit trust and confidence also.

"No, Massa Rogers, you never did; and you was always good to us black folks, and never cussed us, nor kicked us, nor cuffed us about, and so I'll tell you. Massa treats us all worser than you knows of."

"Then you don't love him much?"

"I couldn't, if I tried. But I never tried."

"And you have been thinking of going off with the Union soldiers, when they leave this neighborhood?"

"Yes, sa!. I'se done made up my mind!"

"Well, they will take you if you ask them; but I do not think they want you now, unless you will go as a soldier.

And you need not go on account of Parson Williams's treatment. If you answer my questions truly, I do not think he will trouble you after to-morrow."

It was some time before the negro comprehended the exact meaning of the white man; and when he did, he exhibited much more of dissent and alarm than Rogers had anticipated. Whatever may be said to the contrary, the negro is very far from being cruel or blood-thirsty by nature. The first saturnalia of that freedom which is now dawning upon him may give rise to the exhibition of some such traits—it would be wonderful if it did not—but they are very far from being characteristic of the race. In all the trials and temptations to which they have been subjected, in all the daily and hourly opportunities which have been presented to them of imbruing their hands in the blood of their masters, with comparatively little risk of detection, they have gone on in the performance of their allotted tasks, from generation to generation, with a meekness and docility, a degree of kindly regard for their owners, an absolute horror of violence, and a patient submission to treatment, which was, in many cases, the reverse of humane, that has never been approached by any other tribe or variety of the human species. Revenge and destructiveness are foreign to the head and the heart of the black man, at least as he exhibits himself on the North American continent. There is not a planter at the South, whose entire crop has not been every year at the mercy of his slaves, from the time it was gathered until transported to market. There is not a dwelling that might not have been wrapped in flames almost any night of the year, nor a single town or city which could have been regarded as secure, if the negro had willed its destruction; and all this might have been accomplished at so little risk, that detection would not have followed one time in a hundred. But

so far from evincing a disposition to engage in acts of such a character, the owner must have been a brutal one indeed who did not find his slaves the most faithful sentinels over his property and his life. Many and many a time I have seen them weep as bitterly at the funeral of a master, or some member of his family, as if their own nearest relative was about being consigned to the grave; and the affection with which they regarded and treated the white children of the family could scarcely be distinguished from the love they bore to their own offspring.

These facts were neither unknown to nor underestimated by Thomas Rogers. But he trusted a great deal to the new and strange aspirings for freedom that the rebellion had kindled in the mind of the slave. He trusted somewhat to the good-will that he believed the negro entertained for himself, personally, and something more to the want of that feeling toward his master. As a master, Parson Williams outwardly met all the requirements of the benignant laws of Alabama. He clothed them well; he fed them plenteously; he could bid defiance to grand juries and States attorneys,—yet there were many things the law could not reach, which were well calculated to turn the milk of human kindness into gall and bitterness. Parson Williams was a hard man—hard to the members of his white family—much harder to his servants; and Rogers had repeatedly heard him so spoken of: he therefore judged that there might be some spark of resentment burning in the breast of the negro man Isham, which would prompt him to become a willing accomplice, at any rate so far as communicating the information he desired to obtain, and which, indeed, was all the assistance he sought or would have accepted from the negro.

The first reply of Isham was so decided a negative that Rogers began to fear he had made a serious miscalcula-

tion, and the idea crossed his mind that the negro might betray him. This suspicion was, however, soon dismissed, and he went on :

"I do not want your help, Isham. I would not let you help me if you wished. There shall be no finger in that pie but my own. All I want you to do is to answer my questions truly."

"But, Massa Rogers, if I tells you how to kill him, won't dat be as bad as if I helped you to knock him in de head? Oh, sa! let him alone! God Amighty will tend to him by'm-by."

"God Almighty works by human means, Isham; and who shall say that I am not his agent in cutting short the career of that dark and dangerous man? He must die to-morrow, Isham. You will not betray me!"

"Neber, sa, neber! They shall whip all the skin off my back before dey gits a word from me. But you see, sa, if I helps you, I can't neber go coon hunting, or possum hunting no more."

"Why, Isham? I cannot see why that should keep you from hunting as usual.

"Kase, I'd see his ghost in ebery hollow, and in ebery bush on the mountain."

"I do not want your *help*, I tell you. I do not want you to see him die, or to know anything about it, except that I have sworn to kill him; and when you hear that he is dead, be careful not to say or do anything to make people suspect me, until I give you permission to tell all you know. Now tell me what time he gets up in the morning. Does he go to the field himself, or what does he do before breakfast?"

"He gits up ebery mornin' before day. Den he calls us black ones, and sends us out to work. Den he goes back to de house, and takes his mornin' dram, and as

soon as day comes he goes out to de hog-pen and feeds de hogs."

"Where is the hog-pen?"

"Jis back ob de hoss lot, on de creek."

"Oh, yes! I know. I have passed it many a time. It is not a pen at all, only a feeding-place in the woods."

"Jis so, sa. We calls it a pen, kase we always makes a pen dere in fattening time."

Rogers asked the negro a great many other questions, but he paid no further attention to his answers. He had obtained all the information he wanted, and only continued his questioning for the purpose of diverting the thoughts of the negro from the one important point. At length he rose and said:

"It is getting dark, Isham, and as I reckon your master does not allow you to be out at night, you had better be going. Remember, you must never tell any one that you have seen me here this evening."

The negro, after promising faithfully to keep the secret, wended his way homeward. As soon as his stalwart form was lost in the gathering shades of night, Rogers rose, and at once proceeded to a cornfield some two or three hundred yards off. Returning from thence with his arms full of the growing cornstalks, blades, etc., he removed the saddle from his horse, relieved his mouth from the bit, and tying the reins about his neck so as to enable him to feed at his ease, he walked off a few steps, and taking a seat on the ground, proceeded to relieve his own hunger with a cold "snack" that he had provided and brought in his pocket. The meal ended, he made a pillow of his saddle, and, stretching his limbs upon his mother earth, was soon in a profound sleep. An hour before daybreak he was picking his way through the deep and narrow defile heretofore described, and known in that region as "Hell's Passway."

Parson Benjamin Williams passed his last night upon earth in a state of restless uneasiness and of nervous irritability very unusual to him. Several times during the night he thought of sending for a physician, but was deterred by the consciousness that his nervous derangement arose from the sudden and mysterious death of the two accomplices who had recently aided him in the commission of a dark and terrible crime. It is true there was nothing to connect their deaths with the murder that had preceded them, and in which he and they had participated. There was no one, within his knowledge, likely to feel any interest in the life or death of Robert Johnson, except his daughter and his grandson, and Parson Williams had satisfied himself that the grandson could not have been the slayer of either Wilkins or Biles.

But there is always a tendency to suspicion in the mind of the perpetrator of a great crime. He is sure to think that any unusual occurrence has some connection with the deed that is ever present to him, and in this way guilt not unfrequently betrays itself to punishment. Often the very steps it takes to secure immunity leads to detection. It can never rest satisfied with what has been done for the safety of the culprit, but is always fancying that something more is requisite, and thus insures suspicion, and suspicion generally leads to conviction. Parson Williams had not yet fully reached this troublesome and dangerous frame of mind, perhaps he might never have done so, because in any event he was satisfied that no Confederate court and jury would doom him to punishment. He was disturbed by apprehensions for which he could not account satisfactorily to himself. It was not the fear of punishment, or the condemnation of his neighbors; still, there was a vague, indefinable something in his bosom that he interpreted as a premonition that the avenger of blood was on his track.

It might be, it probably was true, so he reasoned, that Wilkins and Biles had been accidentally met by Union soldiers, and killed, either in resisting or in flying from them. But still it wore to him the appearance of a judgment, and he could not divest himself of a presentiment that it foreshadowed his own doom. He was thoroughly versed in the Old Testament writings, and deeply imbued with the gloomy superstitions and stern and bloody fanaticisms to which those writings are so well calculated to give birth, when dissevered from the gentler teachings of the NEW. And under their influence he regarded the death of his accomplices as a warning to himself. This conviction settling on his mind shook his sturdy frame with all the power of physical disease. It is but justice to him to say that this weakness was but temporary. Harsh, unfeeling, and cruel to others as he undoubtedly was, he was always ready to bear in his own person the penalties that might follow his acts. Before morning came, he had, in a great measure, shaken off the nervous depression that overcame him. The conviction that the thread of his life was running short was as strong as ever, but he braced himself to meet the end, whatever it might be, and sternly drove each coward thought from his bosom.

At the usual hour he called his slaves, and sent them to the field. As soon as the morning light enabled him to distinguish objects clearly, he took his gun in one hand and an empty basket in the other, and went out, according to his custom, to feed the hogs. Climbing over the rail-fence, he deposited his gun against a tree, filled his basket from a crib near by, which had been built for the purpose, and, taking it on his shoulder, walked along, scattering the corn, as he went, among the grunting and squealing swine. When the basket was emptied, he let it fall from his shoulder, still grasping it in his hand, and looked about him

with satisfaction upon the well-fed and thriving porkers. There was no danger of want in his family for the coming year, and he noted the fact with the self-satisfied air of a man who feels that he is altogether comfortable in his circumstances. Suddenly an armed man stepped from behind a large tree within twenty feet of him, and a stern voice greeted him with the words:

"How are you this morning, Parson Williams?"

The individual thus addressed started as if an adder had stung him. A deadly pallor spread over his face, and the basket dropped from his nerveless hand. Recovering himself by a great effort, and observing who it was that stood before him, he answered surlily:

"Is that you, Thomas Rogers? and what are you doing here? I guess you haven't been sleeping with my negroes, and as there is no place else you could have slept in this neighborhood, I should like to know how you came here at this hour in the morning?"

"I hope to be able to explain it to your satisfaction before we part, parson."

"Hardly, I think, Mr. Thomas. I heard that you were in league with your country's enemies, and this wandering about all night, nobody knows where, or on what errand, looks mighty like it."

"Ah, parson!" replied Rogers, with a bitter sneer, "I was afraid you had heard something of the sort about me, or rather about my father, and I have come to relieve your mind upon the subject. But first tell me who killed Robert Johnson in cold blood, when he was peacefully at work in his own field, without dreaming of harm to a human being?"

Parson Williams was poorly prepared to meet this searching query. Resolute as he was, he trembled in every limb. He tried to answer firmly, but his voice would not be controlled, and his pitiless enemy marked its tremulous tones

with a degree of satisfaction little less than that with which the savage hails the shriek of his victim at the stake.

"What do I know of Robert Johnson, and what is he to you that you should come here at this hour to ask me about him? What fool's notion have you got in your head now?"

"A spirit whispered to me in my sleep," responded Rogers, "that Captain Wilkins, James Biles, and Parson Williams killed an old man, who was very dear to me, because he would not turn traitor to his country, and the same spirit warned me that the blood-hounds were on my father's track. Josh Wilkins died—and owned nothing. Jim Biles died—and confessed all before he went. It is your turn now!" Then changing his tone to one expressive of scorn and hate combined, he continued:

"Fool! Did you suppose such a deed of blood could be allowed to go unavenged? From the hour that Tobias Wilson and I met you at the foot of the mountain, I have been upon your track. Your last hour has come."

Parson Williams, as before stated, was no coward. The immediate presence of physical danger acted as a restorative, and he sprang for his gun with an agility no one would have expected him to exhibit. But at no period of his life could he have been accounted a match, under equal circumstances, for the quick eye and steady hand that were now opposed to him. He was still several steps distant from his weapon when a puff of light-blue smoke was belched forth from the muzzle of Rogers's rifle, a sharp report followed, the frightened swine scattered through the woods, and the Baptist minister fell forward on his face a lifeless corpse.

"He's done for," muttered Rogers. "No human being ever lived ten minutes who fell in that way."

Then, turning back into the woods, he went off at a rapid

pace to the spot where his horse was fastened. In a short time afterward he was dashing through "Hell's Passway" at a rate of speed that no one probably had ever attempted before. Once beyond it he turned abruptly from the road, leaped a cornfield fence, made his way through it to the mountain side, and never slackened the reins until he had gained the narrow path which led to Tobias Wilson's house.

The sun was not yet "an hour high"* when he rode down the mountain, stabled and fed his horse, and entered the room where Dr. Griffin was preparing his own breakfast.

The doctor's first greeting was by no means a cordial one.

"A pretty trick you have played me, Master Thomas!" he said. "And if I live I'll pay you back in the same coin. To send a man of my age across that wretched mountain; to leave him to feed his own horse and cook his own supper; and then to sleep here alone, or the same thing as alone, in a place where murder has been quite too common of late to make a visit to it agreeable, even in the daytime, may be a very pleasant joke to you, but it's something I shall not forget, or forgive either."

"Why, doctor, I'm sure I thought your patient would be the better for some one's presence during the night."

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* A common country expression, which means an hour after sunrise or an hour before sunset. It is used indifferently, and understood according to the time of day, as referring to the morning or the evening. Thus the expression "the sun is an hour high" (or two, or three) means, in the morning, that it is an hour after sunrise, and in the evening, that it is an hour before sundown, or sunset. This explanation will be deemed superfluous by most American readers, but a Frenchman, editing an American paper, amused himself, and possibly edified his readers, in the course of a criticism on a former work, by a learned dissertation upon the meaning of the words.

"To be sure. There's no doubt about that. But did you think he needed *medical* attendance? You knew well enough that he had no more need of a doctor than you had, and you sent me here in order that you might stay and romp with the girls."

"No, doctor," answered Rogers gravely. "There at least you wrong me. I will tell you all after breakfast. In the mean time allow me to relieve you of this drudgery. I will perform the part of cook."

"Not a bit of it," was the decided response. "You have vexed me enough without spoiling my breakfast in addition. But you may go and saddle my horse, for I shall leave this place as soon as I can get off comfortably."

Rogers obeyed, for the *permission*, he knew, was meant to be understood as an *injunction*. The horse was saddled and brought to the door by the time the good doctor announced that breakfast was ready. The meal was eaten by one party in silence. By the other amid many growlings at the trick, as he thought it, which had been played upon him, intermingled with expressions of satisfaction at the success of his own cooking. When their appetites were appeased, the doctor deliberately threw his medical saddle-bags (an indispensable article to a country practitioner) over his left arm, and bidding good-by to his patient, walked to the door, saying, as he did so:

"I have no '*good*-bys' for you, Master Thomas, until you are well paid for this scurvy business."

Rogers walked out with him, and, taking the bridle in his own hand, led the horse to "the bars." Here he halted, and said, so seriously as to command the attention of his companion, and completely drive away his affected "fit of the pouts:"

"You will hear strange and startling news on the other side of the mountain, doctor."

"What news?" was the eager response. "Nothing has happened, I hope, to any of our friends?"

"Parson Williams is dead."

"Parson Williams dead!" exclaimed the doctor, trying to manifest a feeling of interest in the news, which was belied by the long-drawn breath of relief that followed the exclamation. "Parson Williams dead! Well, he was no patient of mine, and you need not have startled me by leaving me to infer that it was some member of your father's family, or some other one of our friends. I'm sorry he's gone, though he hated me as he did a rattlesnake. What was the matter with him? Apoplexy, I suppose; I always thought he had a tendency to apoplexy."

"It was not apoplexy that cut short his wicked and dangerous career. It was a rifle bullet. I shot him dead this morning before sunrise, within three hundred yards of his own house."

"You shot him! You turned murderer! Oh! Thomas Rogers! I would not have believed it if fifty men had sworn positively to your guilt. And for what have you made a confidant of me? Why should you darken all my future life by making me the repository of this fearful secret? Surely, surely I have deserved better than this of your father's son."

"I have made you my confidant, doctor, because I could not help it. I have told you my secret only to keep you from betraying me."

"Me betray you! Me betray your father's son! Boy, you are cruel, more than cruel."

"I did not mean that you would betray me knowingly. You have misunderstood me, doctor, entirely. Listen. Every one who was at my sister's wedding yesterday believes that I slept last night in this house. They know that I left my father's with the avowed purpose of keeping

you company. If you had not been apprised of the facts, you might have let it leak out that I did not return until this morning. Then suspicion of some sort would have arisen against me, and the end of it would have been that a mass of circumstances identifying me as the slayer of Parson Williams would have been brought to light. Now that you are aware of what I have done, you will be on your guard, and say nothing that will direct suspicion to me."

"But what motive could you have had, Thomas, for killing Parson Williams? He was a bad man, but he was nothing to you. Why did you shoot him?"

Thomas Rogers, after a moment's thought, went over, in answer, the whole story of Robert Johnson's murder; he recited all the damning evidences he had collected of Parson Williams's participation in that bloody deed, including the confession of Biles. He added, that although he had fully made up his mind to kill him for this cause alone, he believed his heart would have failed him and Williams would have escaped his vengeance but for a revelation made by the wounded sergeant, to the effect that Williams was at the head of a conspiracy among the secessionists, who were to be aided by strolling bands of Wheeler's cavalry, to rob and murder all the known Unionists in that part of the country as soon as the Union troops were withdrawn, as every one knew they must be, to assist in the capture of Chattanooga. "From that hour," he went on sternly, "his doom was sealed, for of course I knew that my father would be one of the first victims, and, unless I am grievously mistaken, there was a bloody cross over your door also, my dear doctor."

"Like enough, Thomas,—it is like enough; but still I would rather have braved it, than to have had your hands so deeply dyed in blood."

"And I had rather not. Each one to his own taste, doctor. What I wish now particularly is, that what I have done shall be faithfully kept from the knowledge of my sister Sophy and Ella Whitlock. Now that it is over, I am ready to avow it, and to justify it to the rest of the world; but those gentle girls must not be wounded through me as long as it can be avoided. It will grieve them both deeply when they learn the whole truth, as they must do in the course of time. I know that well enough. As yet no one *knows* anything but yourself. Toby and Miller may *suspect*, but they would suffer their right arms to be severed from their bodies before they would reveal a word of their suspicions. To hide it from Sophy and Ella, it must be hidden from all; and, to do that, you must be careful to let no word escape you which would lead to a suspicion that I passed the night elsewhere than in this house."

"I shall take good care of that, I promise you. I know too well what anguish it will bring to your father, not to use every precaution to keep that knowledge far away from him as long as it can be done. It will be a terrible blow to him."

"I know my father well, and in that quarter I fear nothing. He would not have done the deed himself for any earthly reward, but he knows how well these villains deserved the doom they have met, and he will soon forgive me for playing the part of executioner in times when, and in a land where violated law has no public vindicator. I am only distressed on account of the view my sister and Ella may take of it, if they should learn the fact before I have a chance to explain everything."

"Your sister will unquestionably be stricken with deep grief, but you may dismiss your fears as to Ella. I was at her mother's when she heard the news of Captain Wilkins's

death, and, instead of tears, her eyes flashed with a fire, which looked to me as if her only regret was that her own hand had not inflicted his death-wound."

"And who had more ample cause to wish him in the grave?" exclaimed Rogers fiercely. "He dragged her two brothers from their home, and sent them to the fatal field of Murfreesborough. Their bones are now bleaching on its rocky surface, and a widowed woman and an orphan girl are left without a rightful protector in a desolate home. I did not forget this, even when my eye was glancing along the barrel of my rifle; and she would not have been human if she had forgotten it when she heard that justice had overtaken the monster. But still, doctor, you grievously misunderstand that gentle and loving girl, if you imagine it will not pain her greatly to learn that a friend of her mother's, who had no legal warrant for the deed, has rid the earth of the presence of that villain, to say nothing of his remorseless associates. A day will come, if I live, when I must tell her myself. Until then, keep my secret. If I am killed, or come to my end by other means, let it be buried with me."

Dr. Griffin assured him that he need be under no apprehensions of any premature disclosure, bade him good-by warmly, though sadly, and rode slowly on his way, absorbed in deep and anxious thought. For the first time in his life he had a dark secret to keep. That secret was a most unwelcome guest in his bosom; and all the more so, because he could not divest himself of an uneasy conviction that, in concealing the deed (or rather the deeds) to which his young friend had confessed, he became, in some sort, *particeps criminis*.

In this mood he returned, according to promise, to the house of Mr. Rogers, where, as we have seen, his conduct betrayed the troubled nature of his thoughts. To his great

joy, he escaped from the dinner-party without a question having been propounded to him that required prevarication. When it was over, he went home, to commune at leisure with himself as to the best line of conduct to be pursued, in order to avert suspicion from the son of his old and valued friend.

CHAPTER X.

With a sad and troubled expression of countenance Thomas Rogers gazed after the good doctor as he rode up the mountain side, and dark and bitter were the reflections which came, like ravens, to build their nests in his bosom. He had entered upon a career which it was now beyond his power to shape or to control. No matter where it led—through thorns and brambles—through blood and tears—in sunshine and in shade—in victory and defeat—he must go on, and on, and on—trampling, with an iron heel, upon the associations, the tender affections, the very memories of his childhood and boyhood, and sternly snapping asunder those links of friendship that brightened the dawn of his manhood. He had put his hand to a plow that glued it there with the power of a hundred magnets, and there it must remain until death severed the connection, or victory, complete and decisive, over the mightiest rebellion ever recorded in history, proclaimed that his work was done. He had consecrated himself to a great cause by deeds we dare not commend, and yet may well hesitate to brand as crimes. It is only in a very limited number of cases that the motives of human action can be penetrated by the eyes of human wisdom, and, therefore, we make no allowance for those motives in our judgment of bad deeds, because we cannot tell whether the assigned one is the true one. Judged by this standard, Thomas Rogers had sinned deeply. But who will dare aver that an all-wise Creator will regulate his sentence

according to the crude opinions made up by the feeble and flickering lamp of human reason? Let us then drop the curtain on a scene where there is so much of doubt and uncertainty—so little to guide us aright. This at least is certain, that, whether he acted as a vengeful manslayer or as the executor of public justice—whether his deeds sprung from an earnest patriotism, and were justifiable on the principle of self-defense—or whether they came reeking from the dark and turbid pool of demoniac passion, the effect was to so intensify his hatred of treason, and all the fiend-like brood it never fails to hatch, that he gave himself up, body and mind, heart and soul, to the task of driving it, with fire and sword, from the land its sirocco breath had blasted. The gibbet and the cord—the torch and the leaden bullet—the bayonet and the cannon-shot,—these were to be henceforth his instruments, because he believed that to these he and all he loved would be given up, if God in his anger should arm the traitor with power to indulge his remorseless instincts. How far he was wrong in this conviction will probably never be known. Not often has this orb of ours witnessed the triumph of a cause so wicked. There is a Providence above us whose purposes we cannot comprehend, and sometimes, to our limited view, the avenging blow is withheld, and the criminal runs his course unpunished. And so it may be with those who wickedly snapped asunder the cords that bound this Union together—roused into guilty action all the worst passions of the human heart—sent desolation into one section, and mourning and tears into both,—and all upon the hellish pretext that, at some distant and uncertain day in the future, the right of one man to hold his fellow-man in bondage might be denied by the General Government. It may be that in the plan of Omnipotence even this may be allowed to take its place upon the pages of history, and be transmitted to

posterity as a glorious triumph, instead of a baffled crime. But, although we may not question whatever decree is rendered, it is allowable for us to hope, and trust, and believe that the same page which records "the deep damnation" of this rebellion shall also transmit to future ages the story of its utter failure, and of the fearful and dread retribution which overtook its instigators.

Thomas Rogers was not of a nature to indulge long in gloomy reflections. He was a man of action; prompt, decided, and energetic, whatever he had to do was done without hesitation or delay. He had agreed with Miller upon a plan of raising a company of mounted men, and tendering their services to Gen. Rosecrans. As Miller expected to enlist a large portion of the company from his old comrades in Wheeler's cavalry, their proceedings were necessarily delayed on account of his wounds. While Rogers was occupied with the mission of vengeance he had undertaken, this delay was a matter of no importance; but that was over now, and with his accustomed restlessness he began to calculate how long it would be before Miller would be able to mount his horse. The time which must elapse before this was possible, under the most favorable circumstances, seemed to his impatient spirit an age, and he resolved to set about the work himself. In order to do this it was necessary to get some one to remain with Miller during his own absence, and pay some little attention to the place. With these half-formed projects in his head he re-entered the house, after Dr. Griffin's departure, to hold a consultation with Miller. When his views had been communicated to the sergeant they were received with a prompt and cheerful assent.

"I can do something, myself," continued the soldier, "while I'm laid up here in limbo. I'll write a few lines to some of the boys, which you can show 'em, and if they

don't stick to you, and do what you tell 'em, I'm badly fooled."

So far everything was satisfactory to Rogers. The difficulty which he saw the least chance of getting over, was where to find a man willing to come and stay with Miller, who was, at the same time, entirely trustworthy, who could be fully relied on not to betray any of the secrets which must come to his knowledge, to the injury of the principal parties. Upon stating this difficulty to Miller, he was greatly relieved by a reply, which the author takes the liberty of giving in his own language, rather than the *patois* of the mountains.

"There is no difficulty about that. It will only cost you a ride of ten or eleven miles. I know a man who will come, and he is the man of all others I had rather have about me. His name is John Franklin, and he lives on Hurricane Creek. From what he told me I do not think that John had any particular politics before the war. He was a Democrat, and was therefore put down as a secessionist, but the probability is that he never would have been dragged into the commission of treason if he had not fallen in love with Sarah Austin, whose father was a rabid fire-eater. Unlike most of that brood, when war came in earnest, Mr. Austin shouldered his musket, and went forth like a man to fight for the principles he professed. John Franklin, from love for his daughter, followed her father's example. After much hard service, Mr. Austin was killed and John desperately wounded, at Perryville. John lingered for a long time in the hospital, and when he was able to travel, came home on furlough. The next day he went over to see Sarah and tell her all he knew of the last hours of her father's life. But he was too late by several weeks. A Confederate captain, who had been in the battle, and who had come home for the purpose of recruiting his com-

pany, heard Mr. Austin's story in the neighborhood, and, calling at the widow's house, became acquainted with Sarah. His visits were repeated many times, and by some means he completely won the foolish girl's heart. I do not know how, for he is both ugly and awkward. Perhaps it was because he had fought on the same field where her father fell. He pretended to know all about Mr. Austin, told of the dangers and hardships they had encountered together, said he was by him when he was shot down, and had raised his head, and poured some brandy in his mouth. John Franklin is ready to swear that he never spoke to Mr. Austin in his life, and did not know him when he saw him; but the girl believed his story, and either on that account, or on account of the gold lace that bedizzened his coat, gave him her love. He took advantage of this, promised to marry her—ruined her, and left her. It was a long time before John found out this. He saw plainly at his first visit that Sarah took no pleasure in his society, so he kept away, and the captain had the field to himself. Little by little John heard enough to make him guess the worst. By that time the captain was gone, or John says he would have murdered him, or made him keep his word and marry the silly girl. At first he wrote to her whenever an opportunity offered, but suddenly his letters stopped. She still hopes for his return, and believes him honest. And as she does not suspect that her shame is known to any one but her mother, she bears up very well. It will not advance me in your good opinion to tell how I came to know it, but as I have already confessed to worse things than that, it is not worth while to keep the secret. I came to this country soon after the battle of Murfreesborough, and stopped one night at Mrs. Austin's house. I did not know any of the family, but during the evening both the old lady and the young one asked me a great many ques-

tions. They soon learned that I had served with Mr. Austin; that I was in the battle in which he was killed, and that I was still serving in the same regiment with Sarah's lover, (though I did not then know he was her lover,) and that I was going back to the regiment in a day or two.

"The next morning, when I was about to start, Sarah followed me to the door, and handed me a letter which she begged I would put into the captain's own hand. She was shivering, and I thought I could see signs of tears on her cheeks; but it was very cold, and that would account for the shivering, while I might have been mistaken about the tears. I promised everything she asked, and rode away. I am not in the habit of carrying written papers about me in these times without knowing exactly what is in them. Accordingly, as soon as I was out of sight, I opened and read the letter. Its contents were sufficient to determine me to pay my old friend, John Franklin, a visit. That night I put up at his house, and before bedtime he was a wiser man than he had been for two years or more. When I asked him for another envelope to replace the one I had broken open, he begged me not to deliver the letter, but to leave it with him, which I did. From that day he abandoned the idea of returning to the Confederate army. His furlough has long since run out, and when the Union troops leave here he will be compelled to take to the woods or be shot as a deserter. Such a hiding-place as this will be a 'God-send' to him, and I know he can be trusted fully and entirely. If you have no objection I will write to him to come at once."

"The sooner the better," answered Rogers. "But tell me the name of this redoubtable captain."

"Captain Joseph Sykes."

"Joe Sykes!" exclaimed Rogers, in astonishment; "oh, what a double-dyed, infernal villain he must be!"

"Do you know him, sir?"

"Do I know him? Yes, I do know him, and he knows me too; but he shall know me better before long, unless my right hand proves false to its owner."

"Well, sir, I've nothin' to say agin that, excepting that John Franklin's got a preference right to send a bullet through his carcass, and as that's the only comfort left him, I hope you won't take it from him."

"True," answered Rogers, "he *has* the better right. We will settle it somehow between us."

He mused awhile, then, returning to the subject-matter of their conversation, he said:

"You may as well write the letter now, sergeant. I shall not go until to-morrow, as there are some things here that must be attended to. You can write while I am out; I will not be gone long."

Propping the wounded man in a sitting posture, placing pen, ink, and paper within reach of his hand, and arranging a piece of plank so as to answer the purposes of a writing table, he left the room to look after the many little things about the farm which he thought required his attention. On his return, the following characteristic note was put into his hands:

"JACKSON COUNTY, ALABAMA.

"DEAR JACK—I'm badly hurted, and you must come and see me at onst. I can't write the perticklers, but the man who carries these few lines can tell 'em to you.

"Your friend til deth,

"JAMES MILLER.

"Posscrip. Bring all your things, at *aulivense** bring your gun and all your ammynishon.

"N. B. Keep dark, and tear this letter up. Don't tell nobody I'm hurted, or whar I am."

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* All events.

When Rogers had with some difficulty deciphered the contents of the foregoing epistle, he inquired:

"Where does your friend live?"

We spare the reader the minute description of the locality, and of the by-ways leading to it, that followed. Rogers listened patiently, and without interrupting him, to the end, although it was much more prolix than was at all necessary for his information, he having a tolerably accurate knowledge of the country, and of the roads and paths by which it was traversed.

"I shall find him easily," he replied. "Indeed, I think I know the house. Did you write any other letters?"

"No, sir. At first I thought I would. But I wanted to see John first, and git him to tell me how the land lay. I warn't much afeerd of making any mistake, but it is best to be sure. And, besides, I don't know whar some of the boys are, and couldn't tell you how to find 'em without your runnin' the risk of bein' shot by some on'em. When John Franklin comes it'll be smooth and quick work."

This view of the case was well and soundly reasoned, and Thomas Rogers was satisfied that prudence required them to await the coming of their new ally before attempting anything further.

Before the first light of the sun had gilded the tops of the mountains on the following morning, Rogers was on his way to the home of the man for whom a common desire of revenge upon the same individual already inclined him to cherish feelings of more than usual regard. From one who carried in his bosom the memory of such a wrong there was little fear of betrayal, and his fidelity was further secured by the peril in which he stood. In addition to this, the manner in which he had kept the secret of the guilty girl who had deserted him for a worthless scoundrel

was an honorable guarantee of genuine manliness of character.

As he anticipated, he found no difficulty in making his way directly to the cabin of the soldier, who was now also a deserter. But he was not allowed to enter the door without some stern questioning as to the objects of his visit. The letter of Sergeant Miller proved to be entirely satisfactory, and as soon as Franklin had run his eyes over the lines he cordially invited his visitor to enter, at the same time inquiring his name. Rogers had ridden hard, and it was yet long before the breakfast hour of cities when he reached his place of destination. The poor cannot afford to indulge in "morning naps," and are generally beginning to think of their dinners by the time the rich and luxuriant have coaxed back the appetite stolen away by the night's indulgences. The breakfast things in the cabin of John Franklin had been removed more than an hour before, but that individual, knowing the distance his guest had traveled, jumped to the conclusion that he must be hungry, and calling his mother, with ready hospitality he said:

"Mother, git Mr. Rogers some breakfast, please mam, while I feed his horse."

Rogers protested against giving the old lady so much trouble, said he had eaten "a bite" before leaving home, and denied that he felt hungry in the least degree. Franklin insisted upon his taking a cup of coffee, (an uncommon luxury in that region,) and his mother joined him, declaring it was "not the least mite of trouble." It was impossible to decline their offers without rudeness, and, indeed, his early ride *had* sharpened his appetite, and the cup of coffee was no light temptation in itself. For nearly an hour the time passed pleasantly enough, considering that there were so many subjects of conversation upon which neither cared to touch; neither knowing exactly how far

it might be pleasing, or the reverse, to the other. At length Mrs. Franklin left the room, and the two men entered upon the same serious business that had brought them together. Rogers did not think it necessary to communicate to his companion anything further than the fact that Miller had been badly wounded in a skirmish, that he had been taken to the house of Tobias Wilson, and was now doing remarkably well.

"The sergeant," he added, "is much troubled on account of the danger of capture to which he is subjected in his present helpless state. I must often leave him alone, and at such times it would be very consoling to have a true and faithful friend to watch by his side. He earnestly begs that you will go back with me to-day. He says that he has matters of life and death to talk to you about, and among other things he told me that there is a plan on foot to catch you; to have you carried South, and shot as a deserter."

Franklin manifested no surprise at this announcement.

"I thought as much," he replied; "and when I saw you riding up this morning I half suspected that you had come on that business, and (meaning no offense) I thought you was a great fool to come on such an errand by yourself. But that's neither here nor there. I've been looking out for something of the kind, and my 'saddle wallet' has been packed for more than a week. I'm glad you've come, or I might have stayed a *leetle* too late. I'll go with you right away. When a thing is settled, the sooner it's done the better; and so if you've no objection we'll saddle up our horses and ride. Are you ready to go?"

"Certainly," replied Rogers, who was delighted with the promptness of his new acquaintance. "I foresee that we are destined to become fast friends. I love men who

are ready to act as soon as they decide. Your 'slow coaches' won't do for me."

In a very short time the two men were riding toward the house of Tobias Wilson. Franklin bade adieu to his mother alone; he did not take time to visit the field where the younger members of the family were at work, but left his adieus for them with his mother.

As they rode on, Rogers explained to his companion, as far as he deemed it prudent to do so, the future plans and purposes of himself and Miller, so that by the time they reached the little valley, Franklin was possessed of all that was essential for him to know. His meeting with Miller was warm and cordial, but it was exhibited rather in the firm grasp of their hands and the glow upon their countenances than in spoken words. Such men rarely give utterance to any strong expressions of friendship for each other. A few words sufficed to convey to Miller the knowledge that Franklin was already informed of their plans, and was resolved to remain and share their fortunes with them. After this the three entered into an earnest consultation, which lasted throughout the afternoon and deep into the night. The subject of that consultation may be easily guessed by the reader. Its results will be developed in the following pages.

CHAPTER XI.

THREE weeks passed away—three busy weeks to the tenants of that lonely glen. They had succeeded in securing arms and ammunition from the commander of the U. S. troops in that vicinity. These arms were carefully hidden by Rogers himself, in the cave described in the first series. For that purpose, he had selected times when Franklin was away upon other duties, not choosing as yet to intrust that important secret to any one, even of his own followers. When Franklin returned, and missed the arms, Rogers merely remarked that he had hidden them in the mountains, which explanation was always deemed altogether sufficient.

The muster-roll of the company now showed nearly one hundred recruits. A large part of these were old friends and companions of Miller and Franklin, and were both well armed and well mounted. The remainder were young men recruited in the neighborhood, who were for the most part possessed of excellent horses, but were without effective arms. These were to be supplied by Thomas Rogers, from his store in the cave, and the next Saturday had been appointed as the day for their assembling in the glen to receive them. In these preparations Rogers had acted with great precaution, never allowing more than eight or ten of his men to assemble at one time at the house of Tobias Wilson, and these were always brought in by the two lonely pathways which led into the valley over the

mountains. No one but his associates suspected the business in which he was engaged, much less how near he had brought it to completion. The following Saturday (three days off) would see him at the head of at least one hundred young, strong, daring, well-armed men, ready to engage in any enterprise which promised to be of advantage to the cause of the Union.

While he is waiting for the day of rendezvous to arrive, let us take a brief view of matters on the other side of the mountain. The Union cavalry had been withdrawn from all the posts east of Stevenson, and united under the command of General Stanley, who was preparing to cross the Tennessee River and make a demonstration along the line of Eastern Alabama and Western Georgia, chiefly to create a diversion in favor of the infantry, who had before them the hard task of fighting their way into Chattanooga. Immediately after their departure, little squads of scattered Confederates had begun to appear in the neighborhood; but they had committed no depredations, and the inhabitants felt but little alarm from their presence. On the night after the day to which our story has reached, a larger band than any which had yet been seen together surrounded the house of Thomas Rogers, Senior, and demanded admittance. This was refused; and, as had been foreseen by the inmates, the captain immediately ordered the doors to be burst open. Mr. Rogers had no hope of keeping them out, and his only object was to gain time for the escape of Tobias Wilson, whose seizure, with a view to conscription, he suspected was the main object of the marauders. Acting under the same impression, Tobias Wilson hastily dressed, and threw himself from the window of his room; but this was an outlet they had not neglected to guard, and his foot had scarcely touched the ground when a heavy blow upon his shoulder and another upon his head felled

him, stunned and senseless, to the earth. Before he could recover, he was fast bound and secured. In the mean time the doors had been battered down, and the soldiers rushed in, the captain immediately and loudly ordering lights to be procured. When this was done, the fact of Tobias Wilson's capture was communicated to him, and his prisoner was led into his presence. After one glance, he said, roughly:

"We have no time for explanation now. There ought to be another bird in this nest. Four or five of you search the house, and let the rest search the stables and outhouses."

"If you mean my son," said Mr. Rogers, "he is far away from here, and safe."

"We will take your word for it," replied the captain, "when we can do no better; but we will first try whether he cannot be unearthed somewhere about these premises."

"Search as much as you please," said Mr. Rogers; "but I assure you it will be in vain."

During this scene, the two women had behaved with admirable courage and fortitude. They stood, half-dressed, in a corner of the room, with their arms about each other, scorning alike to plead or to give vent to cries and lamentations, which would probably only excite the merriment of the brutal men who had so rudely broken their slumbers. Once only, when Tobias Wilson was first brought into the room, a violent shudder shook the frame of his young wife, and large tear-drops rolled slowly down her cheeks; but there was no outcry, no begging for mercy, no attempt to soften the hard and pitiless hearts of his captors. She looked at her husband steadily for a moment or more, and to her heart his returning gaze carried hope, and forbade her to despair.

The search was concluded, and no vestige of their in-

tended victim could be found. Captain Joseph Sykes—for it was he—now addressed a series of questions to Mr. Rogers, the answers to which were anything but satisfactory. While engaged in this occupation, and too busy to notice anything himself, one of the soldiers, who was stationed near the back door, suddenly exclaimed, "The barn is on fire!"

The eyes of all were instantly turned in that direction, and, sure enough, bright flames were issuing from every crevice of the building. To do Captain Sykes justice, he had contemplated no such result as this, and he immediately rushed into the yard, all of his soldiers following him, except the guard over the prisoner. It was apparent that it had been accidentally fired by a spark falling from the torch of some of those who had been in search of Thomas Rogers. The first glance proved that it would be useless to attempt to save the barn or any portion of its contents. Fortunately, the out-houses, which contained the horses and other descriptions of stock, were some distance off, and to these Captain Sykes promptly turned the attention of his soldiers. By great exertion, the animals were released before the fire had extended to the buildings where they were confined. The flames had now burst from the roof of the barn, and showers of sparks, sent up from the light material burning within, were falling everywhere about them; while no water was to be procured, save what was to be obtained from a well, from which it had to be drawn by a single bucket. The weather had been exceedingly dry, and a fresh breeze was then blowing. To save anything, under such circumstances and with such means, was clearly impossible, and the soldiers hastily returned to the dwelling of Mr. Rogers. There they found him on the top of the house, assisted by one of their band, endeavoring to extinguish the blazing sparks, which were thickly falling upon it.

"That's right," shouted Captain Sykes, "do what you can to keep it under for awhile. It will certainly catch directly; but you may do something toward giving us time to remove the furniture. Come, my men," he added, turning to the soldiers, "rush in and save all you can from the effects of your d—d carelessness."

All the furniture contained in the house was soon removed to a place of safety; but, as Captain Sykes had predicted, the house itself was in flames.

Tobias Wilson had looked at everything which had been going on before him with both surprise and curiosity. To him Captain Sykes now appeared in a more amiable light than he had ever done before, and he almost forgave him the fact that it was through him that he was himself a prisoner, bound, bruised, bleeding, and destined, he well knew, for the slavish life of a conscript soldier. His reflections upon the apparent inconsistencies which that night had exhibited in the redoubtable captain's character were cut short by the harsh voice of the captain himself. Addressing his soldiers, he shouted: "Mount, men, and away with your prisoner. This light can be seen for five miles around, and there are neighbors enough within less than a mile to render all the assistance that is now needful or possible. We have a long ride before us, and no time to lose."

When these words fell upon her ears, Sophy, for the first time, approached her husband, and, taking his manacled hands in hers, pressed a warm kiss upon his lips; he returned it with interest, and, as he did so, whispered the single word "hope." From the bright flash which came into her eyes, he saw that he was understood. Then, raising his voice, he said aloud: "Father, mother, wife, good-by until we meet again."

There was an emphasis upon the words "*until we meet again*" which was unnoticed by the soldiers, but which con-

veyed a world of meaning to those for whom it was intended. Each one felt sure that he had already devised a means of escape, and that their separation would not be for long.

Captain Sykes treated his prisoner with no unnecessary harshness. Once in his power, it was his policy to conciliate, not to exasperate him. The service to which he was destined was sufficiently odious of itself without making it more so by abuse beforehand, thus furnishing an additional motive for attempts at escape before he was forced into the ranks of the Confederate army, or for desertion afterward. Still he neglected no precaution to insure the safe delivery of his captive. Beyond the outer fence, where the horses of his party had been left under a guard, he removed the light rope which had confined Wilson's hands, and substituted a pair of iron handcuffs. He was then mounted on one of the led horses of the troop, and placed near the middle of the command with positive injunctions to those around him to shoot him the very instant that he exhibited any symptom of an intention to escape. The whole party then moved off in a southwesterly direction through deep woods, tangled undergrowth, and over paths which were everywhere of the roughest description.

If there had been light enough for Captain Sykes to have seen the face of his prisoner when he substituted the handcuffs for the hempen cord, he would have seen something there to make him hesitate. The fact was, that the hands of Tobias Wilson were so small in comparison with the size of his arm, that he could easily withdraw them from any handcuff that would clasp over his wrist. It was a knowledge of this that brought a smile of gladness to his lips when he felt the cold iron encircle his wrist. He had not ridden far before he cautiously made an experiment to ascertain whether his hands could be withdrawn as easily

as he supposed. Having satisfied himself upon this point, he felt perfectly certain that the morning would not dawn upon him a prisoner, and that he had only to watch and wait for a fair chance to escape.

One other matter is necessary to be explained in this place. Ever since the first threats which had been uttered against his grandfather, he had habitually worn about his person a long two-edged knife, but not liking the usual manner of belting it around the waist where it could be seen by every one, he adopted the expedient of having a narrow pocket quilted far back in the breast of his coat. In this way it had escaped the search of his captors; indeed, they made no actual search; one of them had put his hands about his waist to ascertain whether he carried pistols, and finding none, no further examination was prosecuted.

The night had been gradually growing cloudy, and now a thick pall was spread between the stars and the earth. The troop, however, had advanced steadily on its way, as if guided by some one who knew every inch of the ground by night as well as by day. At length they entered a heavier growth of timber than any through which they had yet passed: here it was so dark that a man could not see his own hand within two inches of his eyes. Tobias Wilson heard one of the soldiers near him mutter, "This is Paint Rock bottom; we shall have a good road when we have crossed the river."

"Now," thought Tobias Wilson, "is my time." He knew that the only way of crossing the river anywhere near that point was by swimming, and he felt certain that in swimming such a stream, in the darkness of such a night, so much confusion must ensue as would make his own escape of easy accomplishment. The foremost horsemen were not long in reaching the banks of the stream. It was danger-

ous for more than two to enter it abreast, and when the two first had entered, it was necessary for the next two to wait till they had swam some distance, for fear of the horses striking each other in the darkness. In this way the troop entered the river, Tobias Wilson still being near the center of the command, so that by the time it was his turn to attempt the dangerous passage, the foremost swimmers were already upon the opposite bank cheering their comrades who were still in the water. As they descended the bank, the guard who rode by Wilson's side took hold of his bridle-rein, saying, as he did so: "Hold fast to the pommel of your saddle,—I will guide your horse."

At the same instant, favored by the darkness, Wilson slipped his hands from the handcuffs, and, unobserved, drew the long knife from his breast-pocket. This was firmly clasped in his left hand, while in his right he grasped the heavy irons which he had patiently worn for the last four hours. They had swam but a few paces, when the keen blade was buried deep in the side of his guide, who instantly tumbled from his horse into the river, almost without a groan. The horse snorted furiously, and, swimming wildly down the stream, created no little confusion among the troop, who could not see or understand what was going on. At the same time, Wilson, rising in his stirrups, hurled the handcuffs, with all the force of his muscular arm, in the direction of the troopers who were before him. They struck some one, for he heard first a dull sound, and then a noise, such as would have been made by a body falling into the water. The confusion also seemed greatly to increase, and there was a mingled uproar of questions, shouts, and curses. Promptly availing himself of this confusion, Wilson rolled from his horse into the water, and, putting his feet against the animal, pushed himself far up the stream, at right angles toward the southern bank of the

river, upon which the foremost of the troop had drawn up. Striking boldly out in the darkness, he landed safely under a high bank, and, grasping some of the many roots which had made their way into the water, he listened for several minutes to the remarks of the troopers, who were a little below, and fearfully near him. Some proposed immediate pursuit of the fugitive; others insisted that he must be drowned; while others, again, were indulging in conjectures as to the fate of their two comrades; the general opinion appearing to be that they had leaped into the water to recapture the prisoner, when they became aware of his escape. By this time the whole company had crossed the river, and he heard the voice of Captain Sykes saying that he would go no farther that night, and ordering the men to build fires at once.

Tobias Wilson now felt the necessity of immediate action. The light of so many fires would certainly be cast up the river to the spot where he was concealed, and expose him to imminent danger of recapture, or death from the carbines of the soldiers. Half swimming, half pulling himself along by the roots and projections of the branches, he slowly ascended the stream until he reached a point where he could easily crawl on shore; then, following the river, and keeping close to it to avoid losing his way, he moved as rapidly from the dangerous locality as the darkness and the tangled vines and undergrowth would permit. He knew that there was a grist and saw mill somewhere above him, whose proprietor was a strong friend of the Union, and that the mill was attended at night by two of his negroes, who were not likely to betray him, or give any information that could be useful to a Confederate soldier. But he had no idea how far he was from the mill, or what dangers he would have to encounter before arriving there. He knew enough of the country, however, to be sure that,

whatever those dangers might be, they would be greatly lessened by keeping close to the bank of the river; and he determined to pursue this course, notwithstanding the difficulty of making his way over a pathless "bottom," (in winter, a swamp,) which was obstructed by immense vines of bamboo, grape, and muscadine, and occasional thickets of cane and running greenbrier, with its long, sharp, venomous thorns. He reflected, too, that it must be near the dawn of day, and that it would soon be light enough to enable him, in a great measure, to avoid these annoyances. When the first bright streaks of the coming day made their appearance in the east, he calculated that he was safe from Captain Sykes's pursuit; and, sitting down upon a log, resolved to wait until a stronger light enabled him to ascertain where he was. In the mean time he employed himself pulling out, as well as he could, the long thorns which had imbedded themselves in various parts of his body, and from which he was literally bleeding at every pore. Waiting until the sun's rays began to steal over the tops of the mountains, he looked about him in vain for some familiar object. Still he knew that his course must be up the stream. He was aware that, by keeping close to it, the distance he had to travel would be trebled or quadrupled; but there was safety in that lonely bottom, while the open country was filled with enemies; and so, patiently and hopefully, he kept on his pathless and toilsome journey. He was young, strong, accustomed to encounter fatigue and difficulty, and pursued his way with unabated speed, where another less strong and determined would have sunk to the ground exhausted and overcome. An hour brought him within sight of an open clearing on his left, and a little farther on he crossed a country road leading to a shallow ford in the river. Yet there was nothing that he recognized. He examined the ford, and was satisfied that he had never

crossed it, or seen it before. The river bottom on the south side now began to narrow considerably, and he could see indications of settlements stretching far to the northward. On the east bank, the lofty mountains loomed up nearer and nearer, but all were strange to him, and he began to think that Captain Sykes's company had ridden much faster the previous night than he had believed at the time, and had carried him much farther down the river than he had supposed—though the fact was, that he did not make due allowances for the slowness of his own progress, and the increased distance he had gone over by following the windings of the stream. In another hour he saw, with delight, a mountain of peculiar shape, that he recognized instantly, and which he knew was within about a mile of the mill he was seeking, and some ten miles from the late residence of his grandfather. Encouraged by finding himself at last in a country of which he had some knowledge, he ventured occasionally to leave the river bank and make "short-cuts," which greatly accelerated his progress. About eleven o'clock he arrived at the mill; but, to his great disappointment, he discovered around it such a number of ox wagons and horses, as proved that it was crowded with customers. He could not tell whether they were white men or negroes, friends or enemies, and, not daring to approach it while in this state of uncertainty, he resolved to cross the river and skirt the base of the mountains until he reached the entrance to his own little glen. Following the worm fence, behind which he had been hidden while making his observations, he went straight to the nearest point on the river, intending to swim over. There he came unexpectedly upon a negro man who was sitting upon the bank, underneath a large sycamore-tree, whiling away his time while waiting for his load of corn to be ground, catching the spotted trout and large black perch

with which Paint Rock abounds. He was completely hidden by the tree, and Wilson was within a few feet of him before the presence of either was discovered by the other. This was an opportune meeting that Wilson had not hoped for, and he was not a little pleased at it, for the pangs of hunger began now to be sensibly felt, and, as the negroes were almost uniformly the friends of Union citizens, he did not doubt that he would be able to procure, through his means, the food he so much needed. He therefore addressed the negro unhesitatingly with a pleasant "good morning."

"Mornin', massa," replied the negro. And observing Tobias's torn clothes, and the clotted blood upon his face and hands, he continued: "You looks tired and hurt, massa; anyting you want?" Meaning, is there anything you are in need of, and wish to have.

"Not much," was the reply. "This blood comes from brier scratches. But I am very hungry. Can't you go to the mill and ask Mr. Moore to give you something for a friend of his?"

"Why you no go?" asked the negro, suspiciously.

"Because," was the reply, "I don't know who I should meet there; and as I have just escaped from the rebel cavalry, I might find men at the mill who would attempt to retake me. You see I am in no condition to resist."

The negro looked at him intently, and then said, eagerly:

"You would be cotch, sir, sartain, sure. Dare's four or five ob dem secesh at de mill wid guns, and they'd kill you, or take you quick enough ef you's for the Yankees. You jist take my fishin' pole, and Jake 'll git what you want. Don't you go dar."

So saying, the negro handed his pole to Wilson, and turned toward the mill.

"Tell Mr. Moore," said Wilson, as he walked away, "that my name is Tobias Wilson. He knows me, and will gladly help me."

"Nebber mind dat," responded the negro, "I got plenty in my wagon, and maybe I can't speak to Mr. Moore widout dem secesh hearin' me, and den de debil'd be to play all 'round."

Another, and apparently knotty question seemed to perplex him, for he stood with his hat in one hand, slowly scratching his head with the other, as if trying to work out some difficult problem; at last he said, almost in a whisper:

"Don't stir, sir, if I stays a little longer than you think I ought to, excepen you hear me singin', or makin' some kind of a fuss; den you drop my pole on de bank and swim for dat thicket on todder side quick as you kin afore dey sees you."

After this caution he seemed to think nothing more was necessary and went on to the mill, walking slowly and leisurely, and whistling with apparent unconcern. He had been gone not much over a half hour before he returned, carrying a basket on his arm, well filled with provisions.

"I seed Mr. Moore, sir, and he slipped some chicken, and biscuit, and a bottle of milk in my basket. I'se got plenty ob bacon, and corn bread, and cabbage, and taters; and here it is. Eat as much as you wants." He placed the basket before Wilson, who lost no time in beginning to empty it of its contents. In one of the pauses of mastication, he asked if Mr. Moore had sent him any message.

"Yes, sir," replied the negro; "he say you must git away from here right off—dat you must keep up de river on todder side. He say dar's a cunnoo 'bout a mile 'bove here whar dare is tree sycamores togedder on de bank,—dat you must take it, and paddle up de river two or tree

miles, when de danger will be ober—den turn de cunnoo loose, and it will float down to de mill."

Wilson perceived at a glance the kindness as well as the soundness of this advice; it not only guarded him against any probable danger, but saved him the fatigue of walking, from which Mr. Moore had rightly judged he must be already suffering. As soon, therefore, as his meal was concluded, he shook the negro warmly by the hand, and offered him a five dollar note, which the black refused to take, saying, "Nebber mind, sir, you can help me some ob dese times, and den we'll be eben. I don't want no pay for helping a man who is fightin' for Presdent Linkum."

Wilson, however, dropped the note in his basket, and, reinvigorated by rest and a hearty meal, plunged into the river and swam swiftly to the opposite side.

That evening, as Rogers and Miller, who was now able to hobble about on crutches, were sitting in the porch of Tobias Wilson's house, they saw coming up the road toward them a ragged, and, apparently, very tired man. Even Thomas Rogers for some time failed to recognize in the wayfarer any resemblance to his friend. He had approached to within a few steps of the door, when Rogers suddenly sprang from his chair, and grasping him by the hand, exclaimed:

"Good God! Toby, what is the matter?"

"Enough," was the reply, "and bad enough. But first let me wash off this blood, and get on some decent clothes, and I will tell you all."

Rogers could scarcely restrain his impatience while this was being done; and, as soon as Wilson came back to the porch, cleanly dressed, and with the blood and dirt washed from his person, his friend eagerly asked, without waiting for him to be seated:

"Where have you been, Toby, and what on earth is the matter?"

Wilson took a seat by his side, and clearly but concisely related the violent manner of his own arrest—the search for Rogers—the fire resulting from it, and the destruction of every house on the premises of Mr. Rogers, Sr.; the conduct of the soldiery, and finally his own escape, the manner of it, and the sufferings he had undergone in accomplishing it.

The thunder-cloud that had gathered on the brow of Rogers at the beginning of the story slightly cleared away when he heard that one trooper was certainly killed, and another probably drowned in the river. Still there was a lurid fire in his eyes, which, from early boyhood, had betokened that passions of the darkest and deadliest character had been awakened in his bosom. At the conclusion of the narrative, he said: "Captain Joe Sykes is running up an account with me which he will be apt to find more pleasant in the making than in the settlement."

Nothing more was said until supper time, when many questions, embracing all the particulars, were asked and answered. Then Rogers said:

"You are badly in need of rest, Toby, and must go to bed. I will ride over to Dr. Griffin's to-night, and see them all, (for I know they are there,) and then we can tell better what is to be done."

"I will go with you," said Wilson. "You can furnish me a horse, I suppose?"

"Miller can certainly lend you a horse," was the answer; "but you do not leave this house to-night, if I can help it. You can do me no good, and you are in no condition to cross that mountain. After a good night's rest, you will be able to do all that may be required of you."

Remonstrances were in vain. Rogers was determined,

and Wilson himself, feeling the truth of much that his brother-in-law said, was finally compelled to acquiesce.

In less than an hour that daring and adventurous man was ascending the rugged sides of the mountain. Upon arriving at Dr. Griffin's, he found every one buried in profound repose. Cautiously awaking the colored cook, he asked her whether she could rouse his father without disturbing the remainder of the family.

"Yes, sir," was the reply; "his room is in de end dis way. You can wake him yourself by jus' tapping the winder. He's mighty easy to wake."

"It is better for you to do it," he said, "to prevent the possibility of an alarm. Tell him his son is here, and will come in as soon as he strikes a light."

In a few minutes more, father and son were locked in each other's embrace. After the first warm greetings were over, Thomas said: "Now, father, get back to your bed and I will take a seat by its side. You have nothing to tell me, for I know all that has happened; but I have some good news for you. Toby has escaped, and is now at his own house. Poor fellow! he wanted to come with me, but he was so much bruised and worn and tired that I would not allow it."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Mr. Rogers; "I must let his mother and his wife know the good tidings. Wait here until I come back."

"Not yet," replied his son. "Don't wake them yet. I want to see them very much; but first I must have a long talk with you. Have you formed any plans for the future?"

"No, we have all been too busy to-day to think of anything but the present. But for Dr. Griffin's kindness, I know not what we should have done. As it is, we are very comfortable. He has a large house and no family,

and, with the aid of our own furniture, there is nothing left for us to wish, though we cannot help feeling that it is not *home*."

"If I live," said his son, "he shall be repaid a hundredfold. But now to other matters. *You cannot stay here.* I have raised a company of Union soldiers, who will have their final meeting at Toby's house the day after to-morrow. After that I shall not stay in this neighborhood any longer than is necessary to hunt up Captain Sykes's gang. I hope to leave but few of them alive; but some will escape, of course. If there is *but one*, he will try to revenge on you the blows received from me. You have bad neighbors enough who will urge him on, and help him too, if needful."

We omit the details of the long conversation that followed. It was finally agreed that the best thing would be for Mr. Rogers to sell his stock and his growing crop for the highest price he could get, and remove with his family to Ohio, where he had a number of relatives. It was suggested by Mr. Rogers that he could there rent a small farm containing land enough for himself and Tobias Wilson to cultivate, and that all he needed would be money enough from the sale of his property to take them there and support them until something could be made by their own labor.

At the mention of Tobias Wilson's name, his son shook his head negatively.

"I am afraid that you must leave Toby out of your calculations. He will not go; at least not now, or for some time to come."

"Did he say so?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"No," was the answer, "for we never thought of this plan; but I know him better than I know myself, and, weak and exhausted as he was, I could read in his eyes a

fixed and settled purpose, from which no human being can turn him."

"I think," said Mr. Rogers, "that Sophy may be able to persuade him to go with us."

"Not she," was the prompt reply. "She conquered once; but you saw what a terrible struggle it cost them both. The next triumph will be his."

"Well," said the old man, "it may be so; but let us hope to the contrary. It will grieve both Sophy and his mother deeply to part with him. When he comes to think of this he may yield; at all events, we must try to take him."

"There is no harm in that," replied his son; "but I know how it will end. Now, father, will you contrive to let Mrs. Wilson and Sophy know that I am here? I cannot linger long, and I wish, at least, to shake them by the hand—though I cannot do much more—before I go. Daylight must not find me on this side of the mountain, and it is now past two o'clock in the morning."

The ladies were soon awakened and brought into Mr. Rogers's room. Shaking Mrs. Wilson warmly by the hand and imprinting a kiss upon his sister's cheek, Thomas Rogers communicated to them the glad tidings of Tobias Wilson's escape, and that he was now safely in his own house, though considerably bruised and greatly exhausted by what he had undergone.

"He will be here to-morrow night," he continued, "by eleven o'clock; and now I must ride. Give my warmest thanks to Dr. Griffin. I will not disturb him to-night; but I beg you to say to him that he shall never have cause to regret what he has done, and that I will see him to-morrow night and thank him in person. He need not sit up; I will wake him."

Thomas Rogers was mistaken in supposing that he was

to get away so easily. Each of the ladies had very many questions to ask him, and it was fully a half hour before the door closed upon him, even after he had twice bidden them good-by. With rapid strides he moved to where his horse was fastened, fearing that he was too late to escape observation, and, mounting him in equal haste, sped upon his homeward journey more like a guilty fugitive than one who had a right to travel whither he listed.

On his return he communicated to Wilson the result of his conversation with his father. When he had concluded, Wilson replied:

"I like the plan well enough; but there is one difficulty which you seem to have overlooked. Where are they to get the money which will be needful?"

"From the sale of my father's crops and stock; they will surely bring enough for that."

"Yes, in Confederate scrip, which they can pass while on this side of the Tennessee line, but nowhere farther north."

"True," said Rogers, dejectedly; "I did not think of that. We must devise some other plan."

Sergeant Miller had been an attentive listener to this conversation; and when he noticed the dissatisfied expression which settled upon the features of Rogers at the apparently insurmountable objection suggested by Wilson, he said quietly:

"You need not change your plans on that account, captain, for I have more than double the amount of money they will need, and I had much rather lend it to your father than to be at the trouble of taking care of it. I won't have any use for it until the war is over."

Rogers's face instantly brightened; but a half frown gathered on the brow of Wilson, who had not forgotten

the manner in which the money was obtained, and whose dislike of the sergeant was by no means removed. It was true that the rightful owner could never recover his property, nor even be identified; but still if it had been left to him he would have rejected the proffered loan. He had no time, however, to interpose an objection before his friend replied, with so much satisfaction that he knew it would be useless to oppose him:

"Thank you, sergeant; you have relieved me from a great embarrassment. My father shall give you a deed of trust on his land so that your debt will always be secure."

"I want no security, sir," was the answer. "After what you have done for me, you have a right to all I've got and more besides. I wish it was ten times as much."

"But, sergeant," replied Rogers, "I cannot take pay in that way, and my father will not accept the money unless he is allowed to give ample security for its repayment."

"As you please, sir," he said; "have it your own way."

"Well, then, that is settled. Now, Toby," he continued, "I must go to bed, for I mean to ride with you to-night, and will need all the sleep I can get beforehand."

Left alone with the sergeant, Tobias Wilson entered into a conversation with him, which left a far better impression upon his mind than anything he had yet heard or seen of that individual. By nightfall they might almost be said to have become friends. Such changes are not unfrequent in every-day life, and especially in revolutionary times, where so many opportunities present themselves of assisting or injuring each other. As they rode up the mountain that night on their way to Dr. Griffin's house, Wilson frankly confessed the change in his feelings.

"I told you so," answered Rogers, "and I tell you now that the more you see of him the better you will like him."

"I hope so," was the reply, "and I begin to believe so. We will soon be comrades in arms, and it shall not be my fault if we are not also friends."

It was the first time Wilson had made any allusion to his future purposes. Rogers noticed it, but made no comment. It was a simple confirmation of what he had predicted to his father the previous night. Their toilsome journey was now continued in silence. At Dr. Griffin's they found the doctor himself and all the white members of the family up and waiting for them. We will not attempt to describe the joyous meeting between Tobias Wilson, his mother, and his wife. Thomas Rogers turned away from the fond scene, and, taking his father a little to one side, placed in his hands a package of notes.

"Here are enough greenbacks," he said, "to support you for two years if necessary. You need not sell anything at a sacrifice, but leave all with Dr. Griffin, to be disposed of to the best advantage. For this money you have only to give a deed of trust upon your land to James Miller, from whom I borrowed it. You can have the deed written, and send it to me by Dr. Griffin when he comes over the day after to-morrow."

Mr. Rogers accepted the money, and interrupting the conversation between the other members of the party, he informed them of the resolution he had taken. No particular objection was made by any of the party, and Mr. Rogers, turning to Wilson, said, in a tone of inquiry:

"You go with us, Tobias, of course?"

"No, sir," was the prompt reply. "I shall stay with Thomas. From this time forth my life is devoted to my country. I am sure you would not have me skulk from the field when others are fighting for all I hold dear."

Mr. Rogers had been partially prepared for this by his son, but it was a complete surprise to Dr. Griffin and the

ladies, and Wilson was at once assailed by appeals to his affection, and all the feminine arguments usually employed on such occasions; to these were added some suggestions of a graver character from Mr. Rogers and Dr. Griffin.

The replies of Wilson were very brief, but determined and decided. His wife approached him, and, putting her arms around his neck, softly whispered:

"You will not leave me, Toby?"

"I must," was the reply. "I have been inactive too long already. I needed some such lesson as Captain Sykes has given me to rouse me to a sense of duty to my country. It will wring my heart to part from you, sweet wife, but your own judgment must tell you that I ought to go."

Similar answers were made to all the entreaties which were addressed to him. These were many and tearful; and were only terminated by Thomas Rogers, who remarked abruptly:

"Come, Toby, we must ride. We have little more than time to reach the mountain by daybreak." Then, taking his sister by the hand, he said kindly: "It is vain to urge him, Sophy, and your parting will be painful enough to him without your making it more so by idle tears and vain entreaties. Do not annoy him with them. Let him remain (for remain he will) without inflicting upon him needless torture. Now go and tell him good-by until you are ready to leave this country. We will come over then and guard you safely to Stevenson. You ought to remember that he is the best judge in this matter."

Thomas Rogers then shook hands with the remainder of the party, and bade them good night. The brave girl, appreciating the soundness of the advice she had received, folded her husband in a loving embrace, bade him act as his own judgment dictated, and only asked him to reflect well before his final decision was made. That decision

was already made, but he did not tell her so. He only drew her to his breast, and, imprinting kiss after kiss upon her lips and cheeks, murmured, "God bless you, my dear wife." Then, bidding adieu to his mother and friends, he left the room with tears in his manly eyes, and followed his friend to where their horses were tied.

"You did not tell me, Toby, but I knew that you had made up your mind to become a soldier. I think you are right, but if I had thought otherwise I should not have said a word to dissuade you, for I could see plainly enough in your face how vain and idle it would be to attempt to change your purpose. You need not join my troop yet. You can remain with us as a volunteer until you see how you like us. If you prefer it, you can then join some other company."

Tobias Wilson briefly assented to this arrangement, remarking, however, that it was a useless precaution, as he was satisfied that he should prefer to remain with his brother-in-law. When they arrived at home they found Sergeant Miller busily engaged in sewing up the padding of his saddle which he had ripped open to extract the money that he had loaned to Mr. Rogers.

"There is a good deal more here," he said, "and I am glad to find some one I can trust with a knowledge of it. If anything happens to me it will then be safe, and you will know what to do with it."

Both assured him that if they survived him it should be safely delivered to his father. Then, leaving him to his work, they proceeded to the cave to bring out the arms and ammunition which were to be that day distributed to such members of his company as were unprovided with them.

About eleven o'clock the recruits began to come in by

twos and threes, some of them completely armed, while others were without any offensive weapon. Each one was dressed in the clothes usually worn by him, and, altogether, they presented more the appearance of men who had gathered together for the purpose of taking part in one of the ordinary barbecues and shooting-matches of the Southwest, than of a military association. After allowing what he deemed sufficient time for all to arrive, Rogers called the roll, and, ascertaining that all were present who had promised to be there, he organized a kind of public meeting, in which it was resolved that they would that day elect only a captain and first-lieutenant, leaving the other offices to be filled after they had served together awhile, and could better appreciate each other's capacity. The vote for captain was unanimous for Thomas Rogers, and nearly so for Miller as lieutenant. The arms were then distributed, and a rude camp, without tents, formed in the little valley, permission being given to all those whose preparations were not completed to return to their homes and remain for two days. Provisions had been prepared for their temporary sojourn in the valley, the greater part, indeed, being the free gift of those recruits who lived in the neighborhood, or of their immediate friends and relations. A temporary commissary was appointed, who proceeded, after a fashion, to distribute rations and forage among the troopers. The experience of Lieutenant Miller was now of great advantage to Thomas Rogers. Hobbling to the camp upon his crutches, he gave, in person, many necessary directions to the new recruits, and calling the old soldiers about him, he instructed them to communicate all necessary knowledge, and to aid in every way their inexperienced associates.

"We didn't know much ourselves, boys," he said, "when

we first began, and suffered enough for the want of some one to tell us. I want to make soldiers of these boys as soon as possible, and you must help me all you can." These orders were cheerfully assented to, and perhaps there never was a company, composed of such heterogeneous materials, who laid down at night upon the bare earth in better humor with themselves, their comrades, and their officers, than those who composed the command of Captain Thomas Rogers.

On the next day, when Dr. Griffin came over upon pretense of seeing his patient, but really to confer with Thomas Rogers, he was surprised to find the little valley nearly filled with armed men, a large portion of whom were drilling in squads upon every available piece of ground, including the land from which the wheat and oats had been cut. His surprise was not much diminished when informed of the cause which had brought these men together. However, he saw that it was beyond remedy, even if he had desired to remedy it, which he probably did not. Waving, therefore, any comment upon the scene before his eyes, he called Thomas Rogers and Tobias Wilson into the house, gave them the deed of trust for Miller, and informed them that Mr. Rogers had decided to start upon his journey northward on the following Wednesday morning.

"That is as it should be," answered Rogers. "I like quick work. Tell him that Toby and I will be there by breakfast time, with fifty picked men, to see them safe into the Union lines."

With this message, and many a loving one from Tobias Wilson, the doctor returned; while Rogers again sought the drill-ground, and placed himself in charge of the soldier whom Miller had selected as his instructor. He had somewhere obtained an old copy of cavalry tactics, which

he studied attentively, but he was not ashamed at the same time to be practically taught by one of his own troopers. He had taken up his abode among the men, took his meals with them, and slept on the ground, as they did, thus proving to them, at the very beginning, that he was not disposed to ask them to undergo anything which he was not willing to share.

CHAPTER XII.

On the evening succeeding the events related in the last chapter, in a lonely spot not far from the western border of Jackson County, Alabama, a young girl, and an officer in the uniform of the Confederate army, might have been seen in earnest conference. About a quarter of a mile off there was a dwelling-house, which was, doubtless, the girl's residence. To the right of them there was a thick growth of trees and bushes, extending down a slight declivity to a considerable creek. Through the wood there was a narrow path which led to a spring, whose living waters gushed from a rocky bluff and emptied themselves into the creek below. To their left was a little cornfield, of some ten or fifteen acres, and along its side ran a neighborhood road, which, however, was so little used that the solitude of the place was seldom broken by the presence of man. The girl was seated on a projecting rail of the fence; by leaning his arm on another above her head, the young officer was enabled to bend over her as he spoke, and intently watch her changing features. She did not seem to be altogether pleased, and was apparently uncertain whether or not to believe the words he had spoken. Still, she listened, and did not contradict him. At length she said:

"I am not satisfied, and will not be till you consent to see my mother. Why can't you come to the house as you once did? Indeed, you *must* come!" Then, suddenly bending her head toward the ground and listening intently,

she added quickly: "You must leave here at once; I hear a horse's foot coming up the ridge."

"I hear nothing," said the officer, after a moment's listening. "You must be mistaken."

"But I do, and I am *not* mistaken," she replied. "I have listened at this spot for the sound of *your* horse's feet, in other days, too often to be deceived. You must away at once."

"Well, then," replied the officer, "give me a parting kiss and I will be off, since you think it dangerous to stay."

She submitted to his embraces, but did not return them; and when he had mounted his horse, which had been tied a short distance in the wood, she again composedly seated herself on the projecting rail of the fence. But a few minutes passed when an armed man rode up to where she was sitting, and greeted her with what he intended to be a careless "good evening." She returned it coldly enough, and then asked:

"Which way are you going, Mr. Franklin?"

"That is a question, Miss Sarah," he replied, "which it is not prudent to answer in times like these unless we happen to know what may be the particular object of the questioner."

"Well, then," she said pettishly, "keep it to yourself."

"That's exactly what I intend to do," he said; "but I wish I had found you in a better humor."

"I don't know why it should make any difference to you, Mr. Franklin, whether I am in a good or a bad humor. I told you before that we never could be anything to each other."

"Still," he replied, "there is no reason why we should be enemies because we cannot be lovers."

The restless eye of the soldier had been in the mean time roving over every object about them. He had ob-

served the print of a man's foot in the dust of the road; he looked down the unfrequented pathway, but could see no trace of man or horse in that direction. He therefore concluded that whoever had made the track he had seen, had gone toward the spring; and having no idea that he could extract any information from the girl, he bade her good-by, and turned his horse's head in that direction. Passing near the place where the officer's horse had been fastened, he did not fail to notice the trampled ground and other marks the animal had left.

"Humph!" he muttered. "I have broke in on a private meeting, and that's what made her so crusty; but she needn't have been, for he has been here long enough, I should say, from these signs, to satisfy any girl who is at all reasonable."

Pursuing his way toward the spring, he perceived that the horseman had not stopped to taste its crystal waters, but had ridden directly across the creek. Franklin having last heard of Captain Sykes on the Guntersville road, and wishing to learn if he had changed his course, crossed the creek without hesitation, and followed the tracks of the horse, along a pathway leading through an open space, which had once been a cultivated field, but was now "turned out to rest." At right angles to the path there was an immense "bottom," densely covered with forest trees. Along its outer edge there ran the neighborhood road, from which Franklin had diverged, and which, making a large circuit for the purpose of obtaining a better crossing-place over the creek, around Mrs. Austin's inclosure, again resumed its original course when the obstruction of the creek was passed. By crossing at the deeper and more difficult ford near the spring, a considerable angle was cut off, and Franklin supposed that the horseman he was pursuing had taken this route on that account.

When he neared the wood we have mentioned, he perceived that the horseman had ridden straight across the road and entered the forest. Dismounting to look for the tracks he had been following, he observed the indentations of many other horses' feet, that had been apparently going and coming in that direction for several days past.

"Ah!" he muttered. "It needs no book to tell the meaning of this. It's Captain Joe Sykes's band, and they're lurking about Mulford's, in the hollow of the mountain beyond the swamp. It was him that I ran away from that nice little meeting over yonder. But this is no place for me. He might be coming back this way with more men than I care to meet. It would do me a power of good to git him off by himself, but I ain't ready for a general scrimmage with his whole company."

Turning his horse again toward the spring, he put him to a much faster pace than he had yet been traveling. Upon reaching the creek, he did not cross it, but directed his course up the stream, inwardly saying:

"That girl's watching me; and she said enough just now to show me that she would like to see me knocked in the head, or bored through with a half a dozen bullets, or chopped into mince-meat, or put out of the way in any other fashion. If Captain Sykes comes back to-night, she'll tell him all she sees; but I am a little too old to be caught that way. Captain Sykes and me will have a meeting before long, but I shan't let him choose the time and place and the seconds."

Riding steadily up the creek for more than half a mile through the open field, where he was plainly visible to any one on the look-out, he entered the wood beyond it in a southeasterly direction; but, as soon as he was satisfied that he was completely hidden by the trees, he turned his horse's head due north, crossed the creek at a rough and

rocky place, where there was no ford, changed his course to the northwest, and rode rapidly through an open wood some four or five miles. He was familiar with every foot of the country, and, carefully avoiding all houses and settlements, frequently changing his course for this purpose, he arrived before sunset at a little spring, close by a field of oats, which had been recently cut and was standing in shocks in the field. Appropriating one of these shocks without scruple, and relieving his horse's mouth from the bit, he shook the provender down before him; then seating himself by the spring, he drew some cold provisions from his haversack, and leisurely proceeded to satisfy his hunger. When his own meal was finished, he leaned back upon his elbows, and watched his horse's feeding with real interest.

"Take your time, old boy," he said, as if the animal understood him; "you've got a good hour to go on, for I shan't budge from here until after dark. It mightn't be wholesome."

It was past twelve o'clock at night, when a sentry before Rogers's encampment sharply challenged a horseman who was approaching his post. John Franklin—for it was he—did not have the countersign, and was consequently detained until the officer of the guard came to conduct him within the lines. Inquiring whether Captain Rogers was asleep, he was informed that he was.

"I'll thank you, then, to wake him," answered Franklin, "for I have news to tell him he will be glad to hear; and in the mean time I'll be obliged to you if you'll let me know where I can get something to feed my horse." Having received that important information, he lost no time in discharging what he regarded as the first duty of a cavalryman, viz., to attend to the wants of the animal he rode. By that time, the striking of a light on another part of the ground informed him that the captain was awake, and ready

to receive him. Walking straight to the place, he saluted his officer respectfully, and awaited his questioning with the quiet, impassive air of an old and experienced scout.

"Sit down, Franklin," said the captain, throwing a few additional pieces of split wood upon the fire; "I am told you have news for me."

"Yes, sir," was the answer of Franklin, as he seated himself upon the ground, in compliance with the invitation. He then related to his captain, without further questioning, all with which the reader is acquainted of his meeting with Sarah Austin, and tracking the unseen horseman to the deep forest swamp he had entered,—accompanying his narrative with many shrewd observations, and giving an account of other facts which his keen eye had not failed to observe, and that would have been passed unnoticed by an ordinary traveler, or, if noticed, would have been deemed wholly unimportant.

"He went straight, sir, from the river, where Mr. Wilson escaped, to Mulford's, with his gang. He's no notion of leaving the county; if he had, he'd have gone down Paint Rock, and crossed the Tennessee at Fort Deposit. He's got friends that way, and such as ain't his friends would be afraid to cheep. But, instid of that, he's gone off to a hidin'-place to the northwest—partly, I believe, because it was convenient to that foolish girl, and partly because he's got some divilment in his head that he ain't yet ready to undertake. He'll stay where he is, I think, for a week to come. There's plenty of forage in that neighborhood, and plenty of folks willin' to give it to him; and, besides, it's nigh on to six miles from any public road; so he thinks he's in no danger of being disturbed."

Thomas Rogers pondered upon this information some time before he replied:

"I think you are right, Franklin; but we must try and

get something more positive. You are too well known in that neighborhood to risk yourself there more frequently than is absolutely necessary; besides, I have another duty for you, if you are not too much tired, in the morning. Is there not some one of your old companions who is acquainted with the country, and who is not so well known personally as you are, whom I can send to follow up your observations, and learn exactly where he is, and what he is doing?"

"There's more than a half a dozen of them, sir," was the reply. "The only trouble is to choose among them, one's so near as good as the other."

"It is better to have two than one," said Rogers; "and more than two is unnecessary. I shall trust to you to select them, and send them to me early in the morning. I wish you also to choose a companion for yourself, to make a scout along the Stevenson road."

"Yes, sir; it shall be done by sun up."

"And now, good night," said the captain. "You will have no difficulty in finding a place to sleep here."

"I always sleep, sir, as near my horse as I can." Then, rising and bowing to his captain with unfeigned respect, he walked off, and unfastening a blanket from his saddle, spread it upon the ground, and in two minutes was buried in profound repose.

Early the next morning the scouts were dispatched upon their several errands, and the monotonous drill was resumed. On Tuesday night, the two scouts sent to look after Captain Sykes's business and whereabouts had not returned; but the report of those who had been sent in the direction of Stevenson was so favorable, that Rogers determined to take with him only twenty men, instead of fifty, as he had at first proposed. This reduction was caused by his desire to conceal, as far as possible, the

number of his men. As yet, it was not even suspected that any organization of Union men existed in the county; but his appearance in the thickly settled neighborhood where Dr. Griffin resided, at the head of an armed party, would be sure to furnish occasion for much gossip and many wild conjectures. Before nightfall the extraordinary circumstance would be known far and near, and messengers would certainly be dispatched to notify Captain Sykes, and any other Confederate band which might be concealed in the vicinity, waiting for the Union cavalry, then at Stevenson, to cross the Tennessee River: thus leaving the citizens, as they supposed, entirely at their mercy, both in the enforcement of the conscript law and the tyrannical impressment, in the name of the Confederate government, of whatever they saw fit to take. Thomas Rogers had so quietly and so judiciously managed his recruiting operations, that no rumor had got abroad of the existence of a Union force anywhere in the country, except that which was now encamped at Stevenson. To keep up this delusion, and to leave secession citizens and secession soldiers under the impression that a time was near at hand when there would be no one to restrain or punish any license in which they saw fit to indulge, Thomas Rogers judged it best to take with him a number of men so small as not to create alarm, or induce a belief that they would remain behind when General Stanley had taken up his march to assist in the capture of Chattanooga, which, it was now apparent, would soon be attacked by all the troops under General Rosecrans's command.

The selection of the men had been left to Lieutenant Miller, Captain Rogers not being yet sufficiently acquainted with his troopers, their characters, and qualifications, to decide upon the service for which they were best fitted. The men selected were almost all of them old soldiers, who knew

the value of watchfulness and secrecy, and who had already learned to respect their commander too much to dream of the slightest disobedience to his orders. There are some men who attract the regards of the soldier so suddenly and strongly, that it seems like magic; and Thomas Rogers was one of these. They knew that he had never seen a battle-field, but yet they felt instinctively, that when there, under his command, they would not be exposed by rashness to unnecessary danger, or, on the other hand, to disgrace by timidity or unmanly hesitation. His bearing, when in the saddle, was so firm and decided, and in the camp so unostentatious, and yet so dignified, that it commanded their utmost respect; and his readiness to share every privation with them, won their love, and made him in a few days almost the idol of the rough and hardy men around him. To the restraints he imposed upon them, they submitted cheerfully and without a murmur, and notwithstanding their previous habits, promised soon to become as orderly as the best-drilled veterans of the army.

We will not tire the reader with a description of the journey to Stevenson. It was, we suppose, in most respects like other journeys of the same character, and under similar circumstances. The parting, too, was just such as would be anticipated between relations so near and so dear to each other, when about to be separated for an indefinite period of time. The most remarkable part of it was the gay and light-hearted mood which came upon Tobias Wilson when the Nashville train had disappeared, bearing away all that he loved best on earth. The change was noticed by Thomas Rogers, who remarked: "You seem delighted, Toby, to get rid of them."

"Not exactly that," answered Wilson; "but I am delighted that they are beyond the reach of further insult or

injury. It is enough for a man to witness once in his lifetime the bitter and galling sight of a loved wife and darling mother driven out in the night-time from beneath the roof that sheltered them, while the tears that gathered in their eyes glittered like fiery drops in the light of the flames that made them homeless. It is true, they were spared the added pangs of insult; but these too might come on the next occasion: and who can tell how long that occasion would be deferred, or with what other circumstances of outrage it might be attended?"

"There is more, Toby," replied his friend, seriously, "though you know it not. That sight has warmed to life the old serpent that you thought dead. Watch yourself well, Toby, or the demon of revenge will again assert his dominion over your heart. You do not smile, as another would do, at such advice from me; nor need you, Toby, for he who has felt the poison of the rattlesnake in his veins, can best describe its horrors."

"I should be far," said Wilson, "from smiling at such advice from any one I loved or respected; but in truth, I do not think I need it. I cherish no feeling of revenge against Captain Sykes; for if he did cause all that mischief and annoyance, it was, in part, unintentional; and when he discovered what he had done, he acted like a man, and not like a brute, as I expected he would do. I do not forgive him, but I would not harm him save in open battle."

"How about your own wounds and bruises, Toby, and his kind intention to transfer you from a peaceful and happy home to the hell of a conscript's life?"

"That," replied Wilson, "is a chance I had to take, in common with others of my age, whenever I met with a Confederate officer who supposed he had the power to capture me. But, to tell the truth, if it had come alone,

unaccompanied by circumstances which showed him in a better light than I expected, I am afraid that I should not have considered anything short of Captain Sykes's life-blood a sufficient atonement. But when I saw and heard him ordering his soldiers to work, and working himself like a slave to save your father's property, and observing besides a most scrupulous deference toward the ladies, whose slumbers he had so rudely broken, much of my resentment vanished; and I repeat, that he is safe from me unless he crosses my path in battle."

"I will not argue against your decision, Toby, for in truth I am half inclined to believe that you are right; but if Captain Sykes expects any such forbearance from me, he is leaning on a broken reed."

The conversation here ended, and was not resumed for months afterward — months crowded with terrible and bloody events, in which both had borne a part that entitled them to a place in history.

In accordance with the plan decided upon before leaving his encampment, Captain Rogers remained a day in Stevenson. His object was to discern any spies who might be watching his movements, and to induce them to believe that his purpose was to march southward with the main cavalry force. On the following night he took up his line of march, but not in the direction from which he had come. On the contrary, he moved southwardly toward Bellefonte. Proceeding on this route for some miles, he suddenly turned to the right, and traveling as rapidly as the darkness would permit, he arrived by daylight at a point in the mountains only a few miles distant from the pathway which led them over to the dwelling of Tobias Wilson. Here he dismissed his command, instructing them to make their way singly to the encampment, avoiding, as much as possible, the level country, and shunning the few people who might be astir

at this early hour. In company with Tobias Wilson he essayed to ascend the mountain from the point where they then were. Intimately acquainted as both had been, from childhood, with every pass and gorge, every cliff and precipice, they found the ascent a work of more toil and labor than they had anticipated. Leading their horses, they began to climb the steep mountain-side, sometimes rolling away huge rocks, sometimes treading on the brink of a dangerous precipice—now making a circuit—and again leading them up rugged banks where it required all their strength to support the animals in their upward struggles. At length they reached the top of the mountain, which is there an immense plain, running for many miles along the ridge, covered with a rich and luxuriant grass, and affording excellent pasturage for the herds of cattle and other animals which were driven up by the settlers in the valley in early spring, and allowed to remain with but little attention until the green carpeting of the earth had been destroyed by the frosts of autumn. Here they rested for some time, for the double purpose of recruiting their own and their horses' strength after the fatigue they had undergone. Rogers, taking advantage of so favorable an opportunity, communicated to Wilson not only the plans which he considered definitely settled, but all the visionary schemes which had been floating through his brain for the last five or six weeks. At some of these his friend only smiled, to others he interposed a decided negative, and others again were noted as worthy of future consideration.

"I expect, Toby," said Rogers, rising and throwing the bridle-rein over his horse's head, "that you will have it all your own way at last; for although I believe you are a more passionate and headstrong man than I am, you never seem to let your passions get the better of your judgment, and never allow your brain to be troubled by such wild

visions as are constantly running through mine. I had rather trust to your opinion than mine at any time."

"You don't know," said his brother-in-law, "what is passing in my brain. I may have as many unsubstantial dreams as you have, without telling about them. As to your future course, you ought not to be governed by my advice, unless, after examination, you are satisfied that it is sound. I shall be with you I hope for a long time, and you need not make any important movement without reflection. My opinions will always be given to you frankly and fully."

"I shall not fail to ask for them, Toby; and now let us ride. I am both hungry and sleepy, and shall be rejoiced when your cabins come in sight."

CHAPTER XIII.

When Captain Rogers returned to his encampment, hungry, as he really was, he could not restrain his impatience to hear the report of the scouts he had sent to gather news of Captain Sykes and his company; and, accordingly, before sitting down to the meal that he and Tobias Wilson were preparing, he dispatched a messenger to the camp to summon them to his presence. Their report was confirmatory of all that Franklin had suspected. They had succeeded in getting on the mountain which overlooked the place where the enemy had encamped near Mulford's house, and had remained there a whole day watching their movements. They seemed to be abundantly supplied with forage and provisions, but were industriously engaged in collecting more; small parties were constantly coming in, bringing bags of corn, bacon, and Indian-meal, bundles of fodder and oats. Besides this, there seemed to be considerable activity among them. Little parties of two and three together, whom they judged to be scouts, rode away from the camp and did not return. At the house of a Union man, whom they knew, and to which they ventured at night, they learned that the provision and forage, which they had seen carried into Mulford's, had been forcibly taken from loyal citizens in the neighborhood. He was himself hourly expecting a visit, and had hidden away almost everything he could conceal. To the remark of one of the scouts, that if Captain Sykes's for-

agers should pay him a visit that night, they would be apt to get more bullets than provisions, he replied :

"They will not come at night, unless they come in a body and mean to do more mischief than carrying off a little forage."

A good deal of other information was extracted from him, and then, having filled their haversacks with the remains of the bounteous supper that had been provided for them, they saddled their horses and set out on their return to the camp.

This report had been made in the presence of Lieutenant Miller and Tobias Wilson. When it was ended, Wilson asked how many men he had with him.

"We could not tell certainly," was the reply, "although we counted them at least a half a dozen times. They were coming and going through all the day, and it was impossible to say how many there were ; but there cannot be less than seventy-five."

"He has been getting recruits," said Wilson, "for he did not have more than forty men when he crossed the river."

"They may be conscripts," suggested Rogers.

"Both, may be," added Miller; "he might pick up a good many straggling soldiers about here any day; but conscripts ain't so plenty, and it's safer to calculate that he's got with him at least sixty-five or seventy men."

To this proposition both Rogers and Wilson assented. The conference was then adjourned until after supper, and Miller was requested to notify John Franklin to attend, as Captain Rogers wished to avail himself of Franklin's intimate knowledge of the locality.

Before daylight the next morning, Thomas Rogers, with eighty men, set out upon his first military expedition, the object being to surprise and capture or cut to pieces the

Confederate troops under Captain Sykes. During the day's march, he had the good fortune to make prisoner one of the enemy's scouts. The information obtained from him was of considerable service; but his capture was most important, because it furnished Captain Rogers with a guide whose knowledge of the direction taken by the various foraging parties enabled him to avoid the places where it was most likely they were carrying on their plundering operations. At another time, Rogers would have hunted up these parties with avidity; but he dreaded to encounter them now, lest some one might escape and carry the news of his approach to the camp, thus rendering the flight of the band almost certain. The prisoner was accordingly placed between two troopers at the head of the column, with a distinct intimation that the first foraging party they encountered would be the signal for his death. Captain Rogers was not satisfied with this precaution alone. Four picked men were sent forward in advance, while others were thrown out from a quarter to a half mile on either flank. He knew that he was traversing a country where four out of every five men were his enemies. He therefore avoided passing near any habitation when there was any practicable way of getting round it unobserved; and when this could not be done, he did not hesitate to resort to the expedient of reporting his command as rebel troops—a story which the motley appearance of the men went far to confirm.

It was dusk as they slowly ascended a gap in the mountains which led to Mulford's house. At this point Thomas Rogers had expected to encounter a picket, or a guard of some kind, to dispute the passage or give notice of the approach of danger, and his advanced scouts had been instructed to move forward cautiously, and fall back instantly if his expectations should prove correct; but no

sign of an enemy was to be met with—not a sentry had been posted within this important pass, which afforded an easy access to the rebel camp. It was evident that Captain Sykes's mind was entirely at ease, and that he had no suspicion of danger. The scout who brought back these tidings reported that his comrades had halted on the crest of the ridge, where they had a full view from the light of the camp-fires of the valley below. Moving on slowly and cautiously until within a few yards of the summit, Captain Rogers ordered his troop to remain in their saddles where they were until his return. Then dismounting from his horse, and calling upon Wilson and Franklin to do the same, they ascended the gap to the point from which his scouts were still taking observations of the valley below. The bright light of the camp-fires rendered every object distinctly visible, and the total absence of any apprehension of danger on the part of his enemies, allowed him full leisure for a careful survey of the ground. The valley was of considerable extent, the greater part of it being "fenced in" and under cultivation by Mulford, who was a man of ample means for that country. It was not exactly level, but gradually sloped upward, in a triangular shape, from the "bottom" at its base to Mulford's house, which was situated near the apex of the triangle. By the light of the fires there seemed to be but one mode of egress besides the one occupied by the United States troops, though, in point of fact, the mountain could be ascended by horsemen who were acquainted with it at many points. Judging, however, only from what he saw, he concluded that if they could be cut off from the dense forest which covered the bottom land, the whole band must be captured or killed, and his dispositions were made accordingly. Leaving a small guard in the gap, he directed Franklin to dis-

mount thirty men and if possible to gain a position on the side of the mountain, within good rifle range of the enemy's encampment. The hooting of an owl was to be the signal that this was accomplished. The rebel horses were all unsaddled, their arms stacked, some of the men were busily engaged preparing supper, some of them playing cards by the light of the fires, while others were lying on the ground or lounging about the encampment, without an apparent object. It had been arranged that Franklin, after giving the signal that his covert was gained, should wait full five minutes before pouring in his fire upon the unconscious freebooters, in order that Rogers with his mounted men might have time to descend the gap, and by hard riding interpose between the enemy and the woods, so as completely to cut off their retreat. Wholly unprepared as they were, Captain Rogers did not doubt that this movement would be crowned with complete success. But there was one important point which his inexperience caused him to overlook. He had no sooner commenced the rocky descent, after the concerted signal was given, than the sound of his horses' feet reverberated through the valley and attracted the attention of the hitherto confident and careless troopers. Captain Sykes was himself the first to hear the sound, or at least to understand its import. Springing at once to his horse, he shouted to his men to arm and mount. From some cause his own and the horse of his orderly were already bridled and saddled. Perhaps he had contemplated a night ride to a more pleasant entertainment than that to which he was unexpectedly invited. Be that as it may, he was almost instantly in the saddle, riding along the front of his camp and shouting eagerly to his men to mount and form. The first part of the order needed no repetition; the second part was unheeded, for Franklin now poured in a deadly fire upon the frightened

and disordered mass, and then rushed on with loud shouts to complete his work with the bayonet and revolver. He had aimed at Captain Sykes, and in the brief interval between the firing and the order to charge, Tobias Wilson, who was by Franklin's side, observed that officer to reel in his saddle; but he quickly recovered himself, and, grasping the reins firmly, wheeled his horse, and shouting "Follow me!" galloped off in a direction at right angles to the woody bottom, toward a lane which ran between two cultivated fields to the mountain.

"You have winged him," said Wilson, "but that is all. Shall I finish the job?"

"No! for God's sake no!" answered Franklin, laying his hand upon the half-raised gun. "If he escapes this time I shall meet him again. There are enough of them in yonder camp for you to shoot. Now come on, and leave my man to me."

The troopers of Captain Sykes were accustomed to rapid movements, and by the time the dismounted Union men had cleared the space between them, the most of them were riding rapidly across the valley in the direction taken by their captain. To accomplish this, however, they had been forced to abandon guns, blankets, everything except their horses. A few of them, perhaps, who habitually carried their knives and revolvers belted about their persons, succeeded in saving these; but in all other respects the troopers of Captain Sykes were completely disarmed.

Thomas Rogers, in his anxiety to get in the rear of the rebels, had galloped by without observing the lane through which his enemy was escaping. In his eagerness to attain the desired object, he never once looked back; and when he had wheeled his men to intercept the fugitives, he was mortified to find that they were already so far away as to render pursuit, over a rough and unknown

country, with his tired and jaded animals, little short of madness. With a bitter curse he rode toward the encampment, which was now occupied by his own dismounted troopers, who were busily engaged in collecting the spoils which had been left by the flying enemy. Here he found his temporary lieutenant seated upon the ground in no better humor than himself. His first exclamation, after rising and saluting his superior officer, was:

"Just think of it, captain,—I had a fair shot at him in less than a hundred yards, and, by God, I only barked him enough to make him reel a little in the saddle!"

"And I," replied Rogers, "was foolish enough to gallop by a plain road, and let him escape without losing a man. What have you done here? Have you captured anything worth taking?"

"I haven't looked; but the boys say that there's five killed dead and seven or eight more badly wounded. I suspect that there's more of them with holes in their skins, but they weren't hurt bad enough to keep them from riding away. Howsever, we've got all their guns and plunder, and Captain Sykes can do no more devilment in this section for a long time to come."

It did not take Captain Rogers long to ascertain that the report of Franklin fell short of the truth. In addition to the captures enumerated by him, there had been taken five or six conscripts, who, at the first report of firearms, had thrown themselves flat upon the ground to avoid being hurt in the *mêlée*. Some twelve or fifteen horses had also been secured; so that the booty altogether was very considerable, and the importance of the adventure greatly enhanced by the release of the young men who had been so unfortunate as to fall into the grasp of Captain Sykes. When these results had been ascertained, Rogers's next care was to have the wounded removed to

Mulford's house, where they could be better provided for than in the camps.

"You will have no objection, I suppose, Mr. Mulford," said Rogers, "to take care of your own friends? I will supply you with blankets from the camp to make pallets for them. Whatever else is necessary to be done, I must leave to you. Permit me to add, that as I will have business with you in the morning I shall take the liberty of placing a guard around this dwelling, and whoever attempts to leave it will incur some risk of being shot. You had better give notice of this to your household."

Mulford protested against the guard, saying that he was a peaceable citizen, who was compelled to do whatever the Confederates wished, as he had no power to resist them, and that it was a hard measure to punish him for what he could not avoid.

"I understand all that," was the reply; "but I have no time to discuss it now."

So saying, Rogers went about giving strict orders for the posting of sentries and pickets, and for taking all the other precautions against surprise, a neglect of which had that night cost his enemy so dear. In the very outset of his career he had been taught a lesson of vigilance that he never forgot. He knew well enough that no danger threatened him; but he wished to accustom his men to extreme watchfulness, and he thought this a good opportunity to impress upon them the useful lesson that there was no excuse for a partisan troop who allows itself to be surprised under any circumstances whatever.

Early in the morning he caused Mr. Mulford to be called from his comfortable bed to a conference which that gentleman would gladly have declined. By dint of close and long-continued questioning, he extracted from him the fact that all the bacon which had been taken by the marauders

was stored in his smoke-house; that the corn was in his barn; the oats, fodder, etc. stacked in his barn-yard, except, of course, the amount they had consumed during their stay, which Mr. Mulford represented as very great.

"You will oblige me," said Rogers, "by bringing the key of your smoke-house. I must look at its contents myself."

A brief examination of the smoke-house was followed by a walk to the barn. On their return, Rogers calmly addressed his companion, who was swelling with suppressed anger at the loss he anticipated, though nothing had been, as yet, said of the purposes of the examination.

"If a stranger should visit this place, Mr. Mulford," said Rogers, "he would no doubt wonder for what purpose you are hoarding so many of the necessaries of life when the number of your family is no greater than it is."

"You know, sir," was the curt reply, "that these things are not mine; that I have barely enough provisions of my own to support my family for the remainder of the year, if, indeed, I have so much."

"No, I do not know it, Mr. Mulford. I find the plunder of a whole neighborhood so mingled with your property that they cannot be separated, and I feel a strong conviction that if Captain Sykes had been allowed to leave here in peace, you would have become his heir. The chances of war have been against you, and you must abide the consequences. Every Union citizen who has been robbed by that rascally gang shall be reimbursed to the full, if it takes all that is here and your own property besides. But I do not apprehend that even then your stock would be so reduced as to prevent you from feeding the first rebel soldiery who may come this way; you would be sure to have enough for that."

"You forget, sir," was the reply, in a sullen tone, "that

much of the provisions and forage was consumed by the troops during their stay, and there ought to be a reduction of the amount demanded of me to that extent. You can scarcely expect me to replace that."

"I have not forgotten, sir, and I shall make no reduction. It would be curious justice, to excuse the robber from making restitution, because he had consumed or disposed of his stolen property."

"But, sir, I did not take it. I did not bring a pound of it here; nor did any one belonging to my place."

"Certainly not; I know that well enough. You would not compromise yourself so far; but you aided, abetted, and encouraged the thieves, and you expected that when they went away you would profit by it. It is useless to argue the case, Mr. Mulford; my mind is made up, and some of my soldiers have already gone out to notify the Union citizens to come and reclaim their property."

"It did not all come from Union citizens, sir; a great deal of it was freely given by Captain Sykes's friends."

"So much the better for you, Mr. Mulford; the deficiency created by consumption will thus, in part, be made up, and you will escape taxation to that amount, as I intend to take nothing save that which has been forced from my friends."

Thus ended the interview. Captain Rogers turned on his heel and walked back to his encampment, leaving Mr. Mulford to indulge such reflections as his situation suggested. They were unpleasant enough, though in truth he had no cause for sorrow, for many of the Union men refused to come and claim their property for fear of greater exactions hereafter, and in this way there was considerable surplus after full restitution to those who came to receive it. A part of this was consumed by Captain Rogers's men; but Captain Sykes was a good forager, and there

still remained enough to support Mr. Mulford's family for more than three months, though he did not fail to make it the occasion of complaints of heavy losses and of demanding compensation from the Confederates therefor.

Captain Rogers remained with his command at this point for two days, for the purpose of carrying out his decree of restoration. On the evening of the second day, John Franklin and one of his comrades, returning from an expedition upon which they had been sent, passed the house of Mrs. Austin. Near the road and some distance from the house, her daughter Sarah was seated on the trunk of a fallen tree. She turned a little pale when Franklin reined up his horse not far from where she was seated, and saluted her as an old acquaintance. Nevertheless, she said, firmly enough:

"And so, John Franklin, you are not only a deserter, but have turned traitor also, and have taken up arms against your country."

"It is pretty well known," replied Franklin, carelessly, "to every child in this neighborhood, that so far as the rebel service is concerned, 'I cussed and quit' some time ago; but, instead of being a traitor, Miss Sarah, my notion is that I have turned an honest man, and have enlisted on the side I ought to have done at first, and should have done but for you."

"But for me!" she exclaimed. "Dog! what right have you to connect my name with yours, or to impute your acts to my influence?"

"None now, thank God!" was the reply.

Then wheeling his horse to pursue his journey, he rode a few paces, and, turning on his saddle, again addressed her:

"I say, Miss Sarah, tell Captain Sykes, when you see him, that he owes that bullet-hole in his skin to me, and

that the next time we meet, he'll be in debt to me for a coffin. It ain't often that I miss drawing the life-blood at a hundred yards distance."

The girl rose up, absolutely speechless with rage. When the power of speech came back to her, he was too far off to hear the words she shrieked after him:

"You'll be swinging to the limb of a tree before that time comes, or I'm mistaken."

But, as she walked home, she was by no means certain that her prediction would not prove false. She could not help acknowledging to her own heart that John Franklin was a dangerous enemy. He was shrewd, cautious, fearless, strong, active, and was, withal, one of the best shots in the country. It is not pleasant, even to the bravest, to know that such a man is daily and hourly seeking to take away the life that God has given us; and when her passion had subsided, Sarah Austin shivered at the danger which threatened the man she loved even while distrusting him. She returned to the house and at once communicated the tidings to him, for there he was then concealed, and her real business near the road was to keep watch, and give notice of any approaching danger.

How little did Franklin dream that his enemy was so near him! It was the last place he would have expected to find him; for he thought that his known intimacy with the family would have prevented him from seeking concealment where it was so likely that he would be looked for if any search was made. Besides, Franklin did not know how serious his wound was, and supposed it altogether probable that he was on horseback retreating south. Captain Sykes's possible presence in that neighborhood did not once cross his mind, and he rode away without a thought of his finding a hiding-place beneath the roof that he had such good reasons for believing he had dishonored.

Yet it was even so. Captain Sykes's wound, though not mortal, was a serious one, and he had not ridden far in his flight before he discovered that he could not sit on his horse much longer. The fugitives, finding that no pursuit was attempted, recovered from their fright, and though still retreating rapidly, began to form in something like order. A few only had fled up the mountain; the remainder, with Captain Sykes at their head, skirted its base until they had passed the cultivated land, when they turned into the wood, and pushed on directly for the country road heretofore mentioned. At that point their captain declared his inability to ride farther, and they at once resolved to carry him to the nearest house, (which happened to be Mrs. Austin's,) and leave him there for the present. Accordingly, a soldier mounted behind him to support him in the saddle, while another took the rein for the purpose of leading his horse. In this way he was safely conducted to Mrs. Austin's dwelling. The men remained no longer than to see him placed comfortably in bed, and to receive his commands to make their way singly, or in pairs, to Guntersville on the south side of the Tennessee, where they could obtain other arms in lieu of those they had lost.

On the third day Captain Rogers broke up his encampment, and returned to Tobias Wilson's house. Believing that there was no danger now to be apprehended from irregular Confederate bands, he determined to cross the river and take part in the stirring scenes about to be enacted around Chattanooga, and in Northern Georgia and East Tennessee.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was near the last of August when General Rosecrans, preceded by his cavalry, crossed the main body of his forces to the south side of the Tennessee River. The direct road to Chattanooga is a narrow passway, overhung by lofty mountains on one side, and hemmed in by the river on the other. There was not a mile of this road where a mere handful of men could not have arrested the march of an army. Even unopposed, it would have been difficult for General Rosecrans to have transported his artillery and baggage along the only route it was possible to travel—a route which involved the crossing of the river twice after leaving Bridgeport, making three crossings in a distance of less than thirty miles. Accordingly, the army was moved southward down two valleys between the mountain ranges, in the direction of Rome and Dalton, Georgia. It would be altogether foreign to the purpose of this story to embrace in it an account of the great historical events which were about to transpire in that wild and rugged region, and stamp it with the seal of immortality. They will be referred to only so far as they affected the movements of individuals whose adventures are herein recorded, and whose subsequent career we propose to trace out.

Believing that the country was now almost entirely clear of prowling bands of Wheeler's cavalry, and that his friends were consequently safe from molestation, Thomas Rogers crossed the river, and by rapid marches soon overtook the

advancing Union army. Here the services of his troop were immediately put into requisition. He was directed to scour the country to the south and east, and report daily all that he was enabled to learn of the strength, position, and probable movements of the rebels. This was a duty they were peculiarly fitted to discharge, and the order was received by the men with a cheerful acquiescence, which proved that it would not be negligently performed. Reared among the mountains—accustomed from early boyhood to clamber over them on foot and on horseback—they had become familiar with the characteristics of the whole range, and could tell in the darkest night, from an examination of the strata of rock, what direction to journey, as certainly as the sailor is able to direct the course of his vessel by the north star. They were thus enabled to render essential service to the Union army; but they were themselves subjected to harrowing sights of distress on the one hand, and cruel barbarity on the other, for which they were not prepared.

The inhabitants of these mountains, like those of the entire range, from the western border of Virginia to the eastern line of Mississippi, were, by a large majority, of strong Union sentiments. But many of the young men had joined the Federal army, and many others had been run down and caught by Confederate conscript officers, and forced into that service. It thus often happened that upon the battle-field brother was arrayed against brother, and the father stood opposed to his little son, whom he had left, when he took up arms for the Union, to cheer and assist his mother during the absence of her husband. He never dreamed that that tender youth would be forced, by the merciless executors of a merciless law, from his mother's knee to the companionship of a hardened soldiery, and dragged to the battle-field, where a father's unconscious

bullet might terminate his young existence, or where his own shot might send that father, bleeding, to his grave. In this way, from voluntary enlistments on one side, and forced conscriptions on the other, the log-cabins that had dotted the mountain sides were untenanted, save by the old and infirm, the women and their children. It might have been supposed that the feebleness of age and the helplessness of infancy, aided by the tears of mothers and of daughters, would have protected these unfortunate beings from further wrong; but there were in Wheeler's cavalry men not originally altogether bad, who had become hardened by long indulgence and the absence of all military restraint, until they had become callous to the sight of misery and destitution, and to whose depraved minds arson and murder were things to be boasted of around the campfire, rather than crimes to people their slumbers with images of horror. These men were performing the same duty for General Bragg that Rogers had undertaken for General Rosecrans, and it sometimes happened that small parties would meet in the defiles of the mountains, when combats ensued, in which the loyal men invariably gained the advantage; thus illustrating a truth familiar to every military commander, that a soldier turned robber can never afterward be trusted to do his duty manfully in a fair and open encounter. But if they would not fight, they could and did plunder and oppress. In their excursions, they would stop at a house, however poor the inmates might be, demanding food for themselves and forage for their horses, and would then proceed to help themselves to whatever else they chanced to covet. In many instances they cut from the looms the coarse cloth intended to cover the ragged children. If there was a good blanket or a warm coverlid on the bed, it was sure to be appropriated. Whatever they could use themselves or sell to others, was un-

scrupulously seized. To entreaties and remonstrances they answered with jeers and laughter; and if the poor people sometimes forgot their helplessness, and indulged in the natural language of indignation, the chances were that the torch would be applied to their dwellings, and they would be left alone with the burning ashes that marked the spot they had once called home. Upon sights like these Thomas Rogers and his men were almost daily compelled to look; while stories of even a darker dye were continually poured into their ears. He felt his own heart growing harder, and longed to be relieved from a service which was enlivened by so little of the excitement of battle, and saddened by so many spectacles of human misery. But there was no one to take his place; and he continued to perform the distasteful duty until it was terminated by the battle of Chickamauga. In the mean time, he had received message after message from home, which filled his mind with gloom and apprehension. He had supposed that comparative tranquillity would reign during his absence. The only troop of Confederates, of whose existence he was aware, had been rendered powerless for mischief; and, judging from his own feelings, he had supposed that all the troops who had been cut off, or who had straggled from the rebel army at Tullahoma, Hoover's Gap, and Shelbyville, would be flocking to the south side of the river, to join General Bragg in the great struggle upon which so much depended.

He was young and inexperienced, and had not yet learned that marauders are not the men to seek the post of honor and of danger. Originally they may have had some faint notions of obtaining an honorable fame by fighting for their country. They may have been deceived by ambitious leaders, and taught to believe that they were called upon by wrong and oppression to take up arms for the protection of themselves and the security of the liberty of

their children. They may have believed, for no pains had been spared to make them believe, that the South had been invaded without cause, and unless they resisted manfully, they would become the serfs and bondsmen of the North; but if such feelings ever had a place in their bosoms, they had been long since superseded by a love of rapine and an unscrupulous thirst for gain. Finding themselves in an unprotected country, and one which afforded an ample field for the exercise of their devilish propensities, they had no idea of exchanging it for one where armed men were to be met, and all the dangers of the battle-field encountered. It was far more pleasant to prey upon the weak and helpless than to face on equal terms the strong and the manly. In their eyes, laurels were a poor compensation for the substantial fruits of a successful foray. The approach of an engagement was no inducement to them to join their commands; they remained to feed like cormorants upon a country which was defenseless, while their comrades were face to face with the enemy. To the loyal men of Jackson County, theirs was a terrible visitation, and they soon became familiar with horrors to which they had heretofore been comparative strangers. Every day had its tale of robbery, every night the heavens were lurid from the flames of burning houses. These were occasionally interspersed with bloodier deeds, until at last no man could lie down at night with any assurance that his throat would not be cut before morning, and his dwelling burned over the heads of his family. They had ceased to regard their property as their own, and only held it subject to the will of the first armed guerrilla whom ill fortune directed to their doors. All this, and much more, was communicated to Rogers, and bitter tears gathered in his eyes as he listened to the recital; but he knew it would be useless to ask for permission to return at such a time.

A mighty stake was then being played for, and individual suffering, however pitiful, and however wide-spread, could not be allowed to interfere with the combinations upon which success depended. At length the battle of Chickamauga was fought. The company of Thomas Rogers had been dismounted, and, fighting on foot, had exhibited an unflinching courage which won for them the highest distinction; but they paid dearly for the honors they had acquired: they were badly cut to pieces; and when the shattered army of Rosecrans gained the shelter of the works at Chattanooga, a call of the roll revealed the fact to Captain Rogers that nearly half of the original numbers of his men were missing. What had become of them he knew full well. They had not straggled; they were not prisoners: they were lying upon the bloody ground where they had fought, either dead, or too badly wounded to crawl from the fatal spot. He had succeeded in securing the greater part of his horses, and this would enable him to mount such recruits as might be willing to enlist under his banner.

The presence of horsemen in Chattanooga under the then existing circumstances did not compensate for the increased expense of maintaining them; and Captain Rogers now easily obtained permission to recross the river for the purpose of filling up his diminished ranks.

It is necessary that we should now go back a little, in order to give the reader a clear and intelligent idea of the events about to be narrated. We left Captain Sykes lying wounded in the house of Mrs. Austin. His life had never been in danger, but he suffered greatly for the first few days, and when the pain entirely disappeared it left him as weak and helpless as a child. During the period of his sufferings he was carefully attended by Mrs. Austin and her daughter, one of whom never left him. No other member of the household was allowed to enter the room except

on special occasions, the pretext being that he was too weak to bear company or disturbance. When he began to recover, Mrs. Austin seized the opportunity afforded her to urge the fulfillment of his promise to marry her daughter. To the mother's remonstrances were added the daughter's tears and entreaties. These were too much for Captain Sykes in his feeble condition, and he yielded a reluctant assent, which never could have been wrung from him in hours of health. Yet, like a villain as he was, even when consenting to restore the fair fame of which he had deprived her, his depraved mind was busy with a scheme to render the proposed atonement unavailing. Knowing that the law required that a license should be obtained from the probate judge before the celebration of the marriage, he ignorantly supposed that a failure to obtain a license would invalidate that marriage. Accordingly, he suggested to Mrs. Austin that no license to marry could then be obtained, as the probate judge had gone to the south side of the river, taking with him the records of his court to prevent them from falling into the hands of the Federal troops. He proposed that if she was unwilling to wait until a license could be regularly obtained, she might send for a minister of the Gospel to perform the ceremony, and he pledged himself that the license should be taken out at a future time, and thus all the requirements of the law would be complied with. Mrs. Austin agreed to this proposition, saying that she could not see how it was possible for anything more to be done under existing circumstances. The next day Sarah herself rode a distance of five miles and brought back with her the clergyman selected to perform the ceremony. When it was over, Mrs. Austin, leaving her daughter in the room with the wounded man, called the minister into an adjoining apartment, and requested him to write a certificate that he had that day united Joseph

Sykes and Sarah Austin in the "holy bonds of matrimony." To this she appended her own name as witness, and, carefully folding the paper, locked it in her drawer.

All went well with Captain Sykes and his bride for something more than a week. His health and strength were rapidly returning, and he began to talk of rejoining his men, who had been ordered to rendezvous at Guntersville. This purpose had been delayed day after day by his wife, who represented that he was not strong enough to undergo the fatigue of a day's journey on horseback. A day for his departure was at length finally fixed, to which she could not well urge an objection. Finding that his resolution was taken, his wife took down his uniform coat, which had been hanging unnoticed in the room, and carried it out to cleanse it from blood stains, and repair the damage done by Franklin's bullet. Exercising a wife's privilege to examine the pockets of her spouse, she found a handkerchief, a pair of gloves, and a sealed letter. The letter was addressed to Miss Ella Whitlock. Without a moment's hesitation she broke the seal, and read as follows:

"Miss Ella:—

"I hope to be in your neighborhood in the course of two weeks, when I shall certainly call on you, though you would give me no encouragement when we parted. But times have changed since then. I am a captain now, and expect to be promoted the first chance there is. General Wheeler has promised me that I should be, and I know he will keep his word. Uncle Jones has also promised me that he will give me his place on Mud Creek the day I am married to you, and this, with what I have myself, will make a start for a young couple, greater than any other pair in the country; and, as soon as I get my promotion, I'll resign and stay at home with you. I hope you will

not fail to see the advantage of the offer I make, and that we will meet as friends who expect to be something more to each other.

"I know that at the beginning you were opposed to our glorious cause, and that you were not disposed to be friendly with our brave soldiers; but you were too young then to understand our rights, and how the 'Yankees' had invaded our country, and killed our men, and stole our property, and insulted our women without any cause under the sun. I hope and believe that as you have grown older, your first notions have changed, especially as your two brothers died fighting on the same side with me; but we can talk about this when I see you. So no more for the present, but that I love you, and will love you till death.

"Your friend and faithful lover,

"JOSEPH SYKES, Captain C. S. A."

When Sarah had read this delectable epistle, she let it fall to the floor, and sat for a moment as if petrified; quickly recovering, she took it up again, a faint hope crossing her bosom that she might have misunderstood its import. Eagerly she read it over again; but this second perusal brought no comfort: there was no mistaking the meaning of the writer, however inelegantly it might be expressed. A deadly pallor spread over her features, and she sank back into the chair, from which she had risen in her excitement, like one overcome by physical exhaustion. But at what frail straws will not a woman catch when the faith of her lover is in question! Suddenly a bright color came into her cheeks, and there was a flash of joy in her eyes, as she said, aloud:

"He has put it there to try me. He has not been out of this house for three weeks, so he must have written it here, and put it into that coat where he knew I'd find it."

Again the letter was snatched from the floor to look for the date. It had none—nor had it any inside address showing the place from which it was written. So far this was rather satisfactory than otherwise; but as her eyes rested upon the paper, the truth flashed upon her that it was of a different quality, and a different size from any to be found in her mother's house. She had herself unpacked Captain Sykes's valise, and she knew that it contained no writing materials of any kind. The paper, therefore, on which the letter was written was not brought with him, and, as there was none like it in the house, the letter must have been penned before he came. She gave a near guess at the truth when she concluded that he had placed it in his pocket after it was written, to await an opportunity of sending it to the lady to whom it was addressed. Her first impulse was to rush in and tax him with his perfidy—her next to show it to her mother, and at least listen to her advice before acting upon her own impassioned judgment. The letter was accordingly silently placed in Mrs. Austin's hands by her daughter, who dared not utter a word for fear of revealing the storm in her bosom. She read it with a flush of anger and indignation, but said nothing until her daughter inquired:

"Well, mother, what shall I do?"

"Nothing as yet," was the reply. "Let me think it over: I'll keep the letter and read it again when I am disengaged; then I will give you my opinion. You know, Sarah," she continued, "that we have long distrusted him, and we ought not to be so much surprised if our suspicions prove true."

"*If they prove true!*" answered Sarah, with marked emphasis. "Mother, they *are* true—true beyond a doubt or a hope. The evidence is too clear for even a trusting and loving heart like mine to doubt his guilt."

The bitter misery of disappointed love was gnawing at her heart-strings; but she nerved herself to play the hypocrite for a time, and, suppressing all outward emotion, proceeded to finish the hateful work of repairing the uniform of the man she was beginning to believe a scoundrel of the blackest dye.

The only intercourse between the husband and the wife during that day was at the dinner-table. Sarah affected to be busy in assisting her mother with her household duties, and toward evening she took one of the long walks to which she had been accustomed in other days, when her husband was her lover and she sought his presence with far different feelings from those that now rioted in her bosom. Oh! how she cursed her own folly as she recalled all that he had promised, and that she had believed! But, like most human lessons, her reflections came too late.

After supper, Mrs. Austin complained of being unwell, and retired early to her room. Her daughter followed, saying briefly to the captain, that her mother required attention, and she would remain with her during the night. The next morning was the time fixed for his departure. When ready to start upon his journey, he approached his wife to bid her adieu. She stepped quickly back, at the same time extending the letter he had written to Ella Whitlock. Looking him steadily in the face, she said slowly and deliberately, though unable to support herself without clasping the back of a chair:

"I believe, Captain Sykes, that this letter is in your handwriting."

He took it from her extended hand, and glanced at the address. If Sarah had needed further proof of his guilt, she would have found it now in the confusion that overwhelmed him. His face turned red, and white, and livid by turns. But he was blessed with a stock of impudent

assurance which seldom falls to the lot of any one man, and besides, he was satisfied in his own mind that his marriage was a nullity, and that he therefore held all the advantages of the game in his own hands. In his secret heart he was not sorry to break off a connection that he was beginning to regard as troublesome, and an open quarrel, began by herself, afforded a pretext of which he was not indisposed to avail himself. When therefore his momentary confusion had passed away, he said, with assumed sternness:

"By what right, madam, have you ventured to open a sealed letter addressed to another? You are aware that the law makes it a criminal offense?"

"The right of a wife to detect the falsehood and meanness of her husband. The right of every one to expose a villain. Is there any law against that?"

"*A wife*, Miss Sarah!" he said, sneeringly. "You are not yet a wife, unless some one else besides myself has the happiness to be your husband. You will remember that the ceremony between us was incomplete—a link was missing, which it depends upon me to supply, and your present conduct is not calculated to make me anxious to do so."

"The ceremony was incomplete!" ejaculated Sarah. "Oh! You mean the want of a license, do you not?"

"Assuredly I do; and as it cannot be taken out without my consent, it will be apt to remain in the office if it is to bring such storms as this."

"Idiot!" she exclaimed. "Idiot as well as villain! And so you thought to trick me with a false marriage! I suspected as much. I had learned to doubt you, sir, and did not scruple to take advantage of your ignorance—the deceiver has been deceived. I remembered to have heard that in Alabama a license was not necessary to the validity

of a marriage, and when Lawyer —— stopped here, some months ago, I contrived to get his opinion without his suspecting what I was after. He said that a license was indeed provided for by law, but the marriage was not affected by it. That the parties might be fined for failing to apply for it, but that was all. That marriage was a civil contract, and was valid for all legal purposes if the parties only took each other by the hand and acknowledged, in the presence of witnesses, that they were man and wife.* And now, sir, we part forever. It was necessary to my honor that I should be able to call you husband; for that reason alone I shall continue to bear your name, but the same roof can never shelter us again."

Without another word or look she walked into an inner room, followed by her mother, who had witnessed, without uttering a syllable, the interview which had just terminated, but which her advice had prevented from being much more stormy and protracted.

Captain Sykes left the house and departed on his journey in no pleasant mood. He was pondering upon the legal doctrine which, to his amazement, had just been expounded to him by his wife.

"It can't be true," he muttered. "What's the use of requiring a license if a marriage is good without it? I don't believe a word of all that rigmarole she has been trying to cram down my throat. It's nonsense."

But the idea would force itself upon him that she had acted too independently, and extinguished too decidedly any hope of future reconciliation or intercourse, not to be herself convinced of the truth of what she had said; and his busy thoughts took another direction.

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* Such is the law of Alabama. False marriages—marriages gotten up to deceive either of the parties—are impossible in that State, if the assent of both parties to the marriage can be proved.

"If it is so, and I'll find out mighty soon, how is she to prove her 'civil contract?' That preacher will swear anything I tell him, and I can kill off her mother's evidence by having them both indicted for a conspiracy to extort money from me by pretending that I had married the girl."

Revolving this atrocious scheme in his mind, and becoming more and more convinced of its plausibility the more he reflected upon it, Captain Sykes rode on with an air of much more satisfaction than he had worn during the earlier part of the day. Continuing his soliloquy, he said:

"If I can't make that preacher swear outright that he never married us at all, I can at least keep him out of the way, and that will do nearly as well, and will cost less money."

The calculations of the redoubtable captain certainly looked plausible enough, but, like all human calculations, there was a chance for them to be based upon some little error of fact, which, in the end, would cause the whole edifice to topple over, to the great dismay and consternation of its builder. Captain Sykes did not know that the possibility of the preacher's being cajoled, or bribed, or frightened into a little false swearing or a timely abandonment of the country, had occurred to Mrs. Austin, and that she had, with commendable prudence, provided against such a contingency by taking from him a written certificate of the marriage on the spot, which completely foiled both of the captain's contemplated moves. If he had known that she was in possession of that bit of paper, it would not have been long before her house would have been subjected to a rigid examination. But he did not know it or suspect it, and in truth if he had known it, he would not have profited by it; for Mrs. Austin was fully aware that he was capable of anything that was mean and villainous, and in less than an hour after his departure, the precious

paper was removed from the house and securely hidden in a place where discovery was next to impossible.

The captain had announced his purpose to rejoin his men at Guntersville, but his horse's head was not turned in that direction, nor did he have the least intention of going there for the present. On the contrary, he rode directly for his uncle's house. It was a hard day's journey, but the captain was well mounted and his horse well rested, so that he arrived at his destination by nightfall. When the evening meal was finished and the house clear of servants, he drew his chair close to his uncle, and in a low voice related all that had happened to him within the past three weeks, coloring, but not falsifying, the truth. That worthy relative fully sympathized with his trials and his sufferings, and highly approved of the abominable plan he had formed to free himself from the difficulties which his marriage had brought upon him. He also informed him that there were a number of scattered bands of Confederate soldiers in the county, with some of which he was in constant communication. He represented that by placing himself at the head of these men, as his rank entitled him to do, his nephew would soon be in command of a more formidable body than that he had lost. Nothing could have been more acceptable to his nephew than the policy suggested by his uncle, and he went to bed that night revolving plans of vengeance, of whose fulfillment he already felt secure. The very next day he contrived to open communications with several different squads of the rebels, and sent word to others of his desire to meet them. On their part they were glad enough to shelter themselves under the orders of an officer of his rank. It was a security against any inquiry into their misdeeds, and saved them from the probabilities of a trial for desertion if General Bragg should retake Chattanooga, and capture or drive

the army of General Rosecrans back to Nashville, and from thence across the Ohio, an event at that time deemed but too probable by many citizens besides secessionists and their sympathizers. Captain Sykes found no difficulty therefore in collecting a troop formidable to that unprotected country, and which would have been formidable to any force which would be likely to be brought against him if they had not been wholly demoralized by the unbridled license to which they were accustomed. When this had been arranged to his satisfaction, he called at the house of Mrs. Whitlock. Ella was not at home; the answer would have been the same if she had been, but the captain did not know that, or indeed suspect it.

He had found that his uniform was possessed of magical qualities among such women as he had been allowed to visit, and he confidently believed that its influence, whenever he chose to call it into requisition, would be equally irresistible with the whole sex. But notwithstanding his ignorant and impudent confidence, he did not neglect to prepare the way for a favorable reception when his next call should be made, by making a parade of protecting the property of Mrs. Whitlock, and publicly uttering hypocritical lamentations over the damage done by the soldiers before his arrival in the neighborhood. He declared that hereafter nothing should be taken from the citizens but what was absolutely necessary, and that even in such cases the impressment—as he called it—should be strictly confined to those who were known to be disloyal to the Confederacy and possessed a surplus from which they could part without danger of suffering.

In the mean time many loyal citizens, disheartened by the battle of Chickamauga, and dreading the fall of Chattanooga, were secretly disposing of their effects and preparing to abandon their homes before a new swarm of

locusts should be turned loose upon them. Confederate money being worthless in the land to which their hegira must be directed, they resorted to a system of barter—exchanging their household goods, and such other articles as they could not take with them, for bacon, corn, horses and cattle, which were smuggled into Stevenson at night, and readily sold for fair and even high prices to the Union garrison at that place. Matters were in this condition when Thomas Rogers arrived at Stevenson. The whole story of the condition of the country, bad enough in itself, with many an exaggeration arising from the fears of his informers, was quickly reported to him by those who had come in to dispose of their provisions, etc. Sending out scouts to obtain more accurate and reliable information, he remained at this point for several days to rest his horses and obtain all the recruits he could from among the outraged citizens.

James Miller had accompanied his commander to the south side of the river, but his wounds did not allow him to take part in the rough service to which his company had been ordered. He now declared himself fit for duty, and assumed his place as first lieutenant of the troop. We neglected to say that an election had been held for second lieutenant previous to their joining the main army. The choice fell upon Tobias Wilson, who promptly declined it, declaring that he was only an unattached volunteer, who might prefer to join some other company, and leave them at any time. John Franklin was then elected by acclamation, and had since discharged his duties so faithfully and untiringly as to command the unbounded confidence of his captain. Neither of the three officers were idle or neglectful of any fair means to obtain volunteers; and by the time Captain Rogers judged that his horses were sufficiently rested, they had secured fifteen additional members to the

company. In less than a week, Captain Rogers, with sixty-five effective men, set out on an expedition to try conclusions once more with his old enemy, who was known to have collected a force nearly double his own.

Tobias Wilson had remained in Chattanooga, as a volunteer aid on the staff of a general officer, who had been particularly attracted by the desperate valor he had exhibited at Chickamauga, and the skill and coolness with which he had aided his brother-in-law in conducting his men from that dreadful field when the battle was irretrievably lost. While here he received a letter from his wife, advising him of numerous others which had been mailed to him, but which had never been received. She communicated to him the not altogether unexpected intelligence of the marriage of his mother to Mr. Rogers. She described the home they had selected as beautiful in the extreme. They were surrounded, she said, with every comfort that could be desired; and she declared that nothing was wanting to their complete happiness but his presence among them. Then there was a whole page of those fond and endearing expressions, which flow so gracefully and appropriately from the pen of a young wife, who is separated for the first time from the husband of her choice. He spread the open letter upon the table, and leaned his bowed head upon it.

"I cannot go," he murmured. "Would to God that I could. But I cannot go. I've many a battle yet to fight, and many a danger yet to encounter, before that loved face will shine upon me again. When that happy hour does come, let me, O God, be still worthy of all her love, and trust, and confidence! But yet I doubt myself—I tremble lest the day should come when I shall be found seeking the life of a foeman in other places than on the field of battle, and from other motives than patriotism. I would not go with Thomas, because I feared I should witness scenes that

would turn my blood to fire. I have seen enough of these already."

And so Tobias Wilson remained with the beleaguered army of General Rosecrans, where his services indeed were of far more value than they could have been as a private soldier in his brother-in-law's company. The future had in store for him scenes of suffering more dreadful than those that he now shrank from gazing upon, as well as individual trials and adventures which would tax all his mental resources and all the physical powers he so abundantly possessed. But, as yet, these were hidden from his knowledge, and in the active employments his position imposed upon him, he found little time to indulge in vague speculations upon the future.

The arrival of Captain Rogers at Stevenson was soon widely known throughout the country. Citizens claiming to be loyal, but who were in fact rebel spies, were daily visitors at the post. In twenty-four hours Captain Sykes received notice, not only of his coming, but of the exact number and condition of his troops. His own scattered squads were promptly called in, and his encampment removed twenty miles to the westward. This step was not dictated by fear. He firmly believed himself capable of crushing his enemy whenever he moved beyond the support of the infantry at Stevenson; but forage was getting scarce where he was, (except such as was in possession of his friends,) and it would soon become necessary to send out small parties to a considerable distance to obtain it. In the immediate vicinity of an active and enterprising enemy these parties would be in great danger of being cut off, and his command thereby gradually so much weakened that he would be compelled to fight on equal or nearly equal terms, or else adopt the humiliating alternative of retreating beyond the Tennessee River. He had another motive. He

calculated upon defeating Rogers's small force with ease; and he wished to draw him as far as possible from any place of retreat, so as to make the rout of the Union soldiers more bloody and complete. The population in the country through which he must advance was, for the most part, hostile to Rogers; and Captain Sykes did not doubt that, if he could succeed in compelling his foe to a hasty and disorderly retreat, many of his soldiers would be murdered by rebel citizens, whom he knew to possess concealed arms, which they would not hesitate to use when they could so easily conceal a murder by charging it upon the pursuing Confederates. In one thing only was Captain Sykes's information incomplete. He knew nothing of the recruits that Rogers had obtained at Stevenson. These men had come in at night, and during the daytime were purposely so distributed as not to excite observation. Before entering the place, Captain Rogers had also dispatched four of his most trusty men to watch the movements of the enemy, and report to him night after night. Captain Sykes's estimate of his (Rogers's) effective force, therefore, was too small by nineteen men—a very considerable item in a body of that size. When his encampment was removed westward, Rogers was not quite ready to follow. His horses were not sufficiently rested, and he still hoped to obtain other recruits, at least for the temporary purpose of destroying the guerrillas who had made such havoc in the country. Nor was he mistaken. Ten others joined him, with the understanding that they should be permitted to return to their homes as soon as this desirable object was accomplished. They were men past the middle age of life, and unfit for protracted military service, but for an expedition of this sort they were quite as effective as younger men. Moreover, all of them had been robbed, and some of them had their houses burned over their heads;

so that to the demands of patriotism were added the fires of revenge, and they were likely to prove dangerous adversaries in an encounter with their oppressors.

The place chosen by Captain Sykes for his encampment was a wooded hill, surrounded by a level country, which was inhabited almost entirely by bitter and violent secessionists—men who would stickle at nothing to injure the cause of the Union, and shrink from no means, however base, that gave promise of destroying its defenders. Unlike their fellows in the richer counties, they were always ready to contribute whatever surplus they might have on hand, and even more than they could spare, for the support of the rebels. Captain Sykes was thus enabled to keep his men together, and prepared to act at a moment's notice. He was soon advised that Rogers was in motion, and readily conjectured that a collision must take place. The accounts he now received of the force he had to encounter, though still leaving him a large numerical majority, varied so much from the reports brought to him from Stevenson, that he could not believe them,—attributing the variance to the exaggerated estimates of the inexperienced citizens he had employed in the place of regular scouts. Still, he had been taught a bitter lesson at Mulford's, and nothing that prudence could suggest was neglected. The naturally strong position he had taken was rendered still stronger by hastily throwing up a breastwork of logs and dirt, which was sufficient to render an attack upon it, by an enemy without artillery, extremely hazardous. Thus prepared, either to issue from his works if he found himself sufficiently strong, or refuse to fight, unless it was with fearful odds in his favor, he awaited the coming of an adversary whose impetuosity of temper he well knew, and whose reckless daring he thought would be sure to give a cooler opponent material advantages.

His secession friends were constantly on the alert, and as constantly in communication with him; but notwithstanding their watchful alertness, John Franklin, with two of his troopers, had succeeded in making a thorough reconnoissance of his encampment. It was only a few miles from the residence of Franklin's mother; he knew every foot of the ground, and was acquainted with the political bias of every inhabitant. He had thus been enabled to obtain a position from which, with the aid of a good field glass, he could note every preparation that had been made, and estimate with almost perfect accuracy the exact number of the rebels. He concluded that they must be at least one hundred and twenty strong; and with this report he returned, as he supposed, unobserved. But one eye had seen him, and that one, as he was ignorant of what had transpired during his absence, was the very last to which he would have willingly shown himself. It had become necessary for him to cross the open field to the south of Mrs. Austin's house. He had calculated upon riding the greater part of the night and passing the place before daybreak, but the darkness of the night and the roughness of the road had so obstructed his journey that a broad light streaked the east before he arrived at the border of the timber which skirted the old field. Pausing in the edge of the wood, he examined the house with his glass; seeing no signs of life, and finding that the doors and rude window-shutters were all closed, he concluded that the family were still asleep, and that rapid riding would enable him to cross the open space unobserved. But Sarah had risen, and started to the spring for a pail of water, closing the door behind her to prevent her mother from being wakened at that early hour. On the way she heard the tramp of horses' feet, and hiding herself behind the rocks and bushes, carefully looked out to ascertain whether they

were friends or enemies. Riding a little in advance of his two comrades, she recognized the form of John Franklin. His features could not be distinguished, but for her there was no mistaking that figure, and she turned deadly pale as the thought of their last interview came back upon her. She remembered his very words; the very tone and manner in which they had been spoken; and it seemed to her now as if a funeral knell was ringing in her ears. She filled her pail mechanically from the spring and returned to the house. Her mother had not yet risen, and she set about preparing the family breakfast, but her thoughts were upon far other things.

What should she do? what ought she to do? what could she do? were questions continually recurring to her mind, and to which she could find no satisfactory answer. Up to this hour, she believed that she had ceased to love Captain Sykes; nay, more, she had persuaded herself that she hated him. When called upon to sign her name as Sarah Sykes, she almost invariably felt her lips curl with scorn, and bitterly did she mourn the necessity which compelled her to retain it. But love does not die so easily, and was there still, in despite of her strong will, in despite of her reason, and in despite of the unanswerable proofs she had of his baseness, and her fears of the villainy he might resort to in the future. She shuddered at the danger that was hanging over him, and felt a partial return of the old tenderness that once would have led her to sacrifice her own life for his. Still, she could decide upon nothing, and impatiently waited for the time when the other members of the family would leave her alone with her mother. When the opportunity at last came she found, to her chagrin, that Mrs. Austin had little sympathy with her feelings. To her, it seemed that the death of Captain Sykes could bring to her daughter nothing but blessings.

She had heartily approved of the harsh and decided terms in which Sarah had informed him that all connection between them, save the legal bond which she could not sever without disgrace to herself, was at an end. She could not bring herself to look upon him in any other light than as a base, hypocritical, and dangerous man, by whom any villainy would be practiced without scruple if it promised to accomplish his ends, and upon whom any solicitude for his safety shown by her daughter would be wasted, even if he did not regard it as an evidence of an infatuated love, which would in the end lead her to acquiesce in all that he required. She feared, too, that he might persuade, or, failing in that, provoke Sarah to say or do something of which he could take advantage. It was decidedly her opinion that John Franklin would do the country in general, and her daughter in particular, an especial favor by ridding the world of such a miscreant. Sarah argued and pleaded in vain; her mother was inflexible, and the unfortunate young woman was forced to take counsel of her own heart alone. It was long past mid-day before she was enabled to arrive at any conclusion, and even then she was almost distracted by conflicting emotions. Of herself she could do nothing to ward off the danger from a husband whose life or death she believed the day before to be a matter of indifference to her. The only plan that appeared at all feasible was to give him notice that his life was threatened, and thus supply him with a motive to avoid any exposure of his person, save that he would be compelled to make in the event of a fight between his own and any body of Federal troops.

To do this it was necessary to go in person to his camp, which was about seven miles distant. She had no one to send, except her little brother, whom she was scarcely willing to trust with such a message herself, and who, she

was afraid, her mother would not allow to be sent on any errand to the camp of her husband. Proceeding, therefore, to the stable, without a word to any one, she saddled a horse, and, leaving the inclosure by the back way, rode off at a smart pace on her errand of love, which she had endeavored to persuade herself was only a duty that, as a wife, she was bound to perform. Perhaps she was right, but none save a loving woman would have thought so. Upon nearing the camp she was of course halted by the pickets, to whom she said that she was the wife of Captain Sykes, and the bearer of a message upon which his life might depend. The soldiers had heard a different story, but even the mistress of their captain was, in their eyes, entitled to a certain degree of respectful obedience, and one of them promptly offered to conduct her to his quarters. When the captain observed who his visitor was, he imagined that she had come to seek a reconciliation, and as it suited him well enough to be upon good terms with her until his plans were matured, and he had more leisure to attend to his private affairs, he approached her with apparent cordiality, and proffered her his hand. She did not seem to see it, and did not notice his greeting. There were many soldiers lounging about, who could see the actions but could not hear the words of the parties. Her rejection of his offered hand could not fail to be observed by them, and Captain Sykes's face was flushed with anger as he asked:

"Have you only come here, *Miss* Sarah, to insult me in the presence of my men?"

"I came here from no such feeling, but to warn you that John Franklin is in this county, and to remind you that your life is in great danger."

"Is that all?" was the sneering reply. "If so, you might have saved yourself the trouble of the ride you have

taken. I knew two weeks ago that he was in the county, claiming to be a lieutenant in the company of that arch-traitor, Thomas Rogers. One-half of his associates are deserters from our army, and, unless I am mistaken, we shall have a good time before long in hanging the rascals, Franklin included."

"But Franklin," she persisted, "is not only in the county; he is now lurking around this very encampment."

"Impossible!" replied Sykes. "He is known to every man in this neighborhood, and could not remain here three hours without being detected and reported to me."

"But I saw him this morning with my own eyes riding in this direction. You are the best judge how near he can approach, and how far his rifle may prove dangerous. But of this you may be certain, he is not far from you, and his purpose is deadly."

"This news," answered the captain, musing, "*is* worth something, if it proves no more than that my friends are careless, and I thank you for it. I thank you the more because we did not part good friends. I hope all that is over, and that hereafter we shall meet on better terms. Shall we not?"

"No, sir," she replied; "we can never meet even as friends. At the time you were making vows of love to me which you never felt, and promises of marriage you never intended to keep, you were endeavoring to *bribe* another to become your wife, and in the very room where you gave me your hand at the altar, you had in your pocket a written offer of that hand to one who, it seems, had little inclination to accept it; and then you tried to deceive me by a base device, which was only not successful because your knowledge of the law was not equal to the vileness of your intentions. It was from no feeling of kindness that I have given you this warning; I have simply discharged my duty as your wife."

"Wife!" he repeated with a sneer. "The day is far distant when you will have the right to bear my name. It will be better for you to dismiss that delusion from your mind; it will only bring trouble upon you."

She turned her horse's head homeward, (she had not dismounted,) only muttering between her closed teeth the single word "wretch!"

Two days later, Thomas Rogers had approached within two miles of the Confederate encampment. He knew the temper of his own men thoroughly, and would willingly have risked them against greater odds than Captain Sykes had at his disposal. The larger part of them had been tried by greater dangers than were to be apprehended from the plunderers he was seeking to encounter. Although they outnumbered him in the proportion of three to two, he calculated rightly that such men must soon give way before the cool and steady courage of his own disciplined troops—troops who had unflinchingly faced the withering volleys and desperate charges of the Confederate veterans at Chickamauga. He felt confident that the demoralized robbers, who, notwithstanding their superiority in numbers, were now skulking behind breastworks too formidable to be attacked by light troops without the aid of artillery, would be swept away like chaff before the wind if they could be brought face to face with his small but gallant and devoted band. But how was this to be accomplished? If he drew up on the plain before them, they would not leave the shelter of their works, and he would accomplish nothing beyond exposing his own strength, of which he was satisfied they were in some degree ignorant. He could not starve them out, for they were far better supplied than he was; nor did he entertain a hope of being able to surprise an unguarded point, either by day or by night. He had taught Captain Sykes the value of vigilance, and

the reports of his scouts convinced him that the lesson had not been thrown away. There was no approach to the encampment that was not vigilantly guarded, and even while Rogers was yet at a distance he learned that the men habitually slept on their arms immediately behind their intrenchments. Their horses, too, were kept constantly in readiness for any emergency. In this perplexity he resolved to reconnoitre the position himself, giving orders to Miller to move the command to a more eligible point, about a half mile nearer to the enemy. He found the rebels more strongly posted than his scouts had reported, and the idea of storming their works at night, which had several times flitted through his mind, was at once abandoned.

That night, when all but the pickets and sentries were buried in profound repose, three men were seated by a log-fire, near the center of the Union encampment, in earnest consultation. They were Captain Rogers, Lieutenants Miller and Franklin. At the moment, Captain Rogers was speaking. It seemed to be in reply to something suggested by one of his officers.

"I tell you, no! They will not come out. They are frightened now, and more than half whipped; if we could only get at them. The question is, how are we to do that?"

"Do you think," answered Miller, thoughtfully, "that he knows how many men we've got here?"

"I cannot tell," replied the captain. "I know that he was deceived as to our numbers when we left Stevenson, but he may have learned better within the last two days. We have been during that time surrounded by his spies, and though no pains have been spared to keep them at a distance, they may have been more successful than we think in ascertaining our present strength."

"If I was only certain," was his lieutenant's reply, "on that point, I think I could fix it."

"How? Let me hear your plan."

"We could then show about that number while the rest were placed in ambush in the woods. By making out as if we meant to pass him, he would be sure to leave his camp, thinking to crush us by a single charge. We could then fall back, fighting, until we had drawn him into the ambush; and then, good-by to Captain Sykes and his guerrillas. If we can only get them out, not twenty will ever escape."

"By the Lord!" exclaimed Rogers, "your plan is admirable! We will try it, anyhow; if it fails to draw him from his cover, we will be no worse off than we were. How many men have we?"

"Eighty-two, besides ourselves."

"And he has, you say, Franklin, not more than one hundred and twenty-five?"

"I should say," said Franklin, "in the neighborhood of one hundred and twenty. I examined them for three hours, horses, saddles, and men, and though I could not count them, I'm a pretty good judge in such matters. I'll bet my horse that it is not more than five men either way from one hundred and twenty."

"That gives him," said Rogers, "about three to our two. We've faced worse odds against better soldiers, and can beat him easily in an open fight, without the help of the ambush; but that will save the lives of some of our men, and make his discomfiture more complete. Have the men quietly roused two hours before day. We must have everything prepared before it is light. Tell the officer of the guard, Franklin, to have us up betimes."

John Franklin went upon his errand, and the other two, spreading their blankets, on which they had been seated,

before the fire, stretched themselves upon them, and were fast asleep, even before Franklin's return.

At the time designated, the three officers went among the men, without noise of any kind, and, passing from the smouldering ashes of one camp-fire to another, awakened the men, and bade them prepare for an immediate march. At the same time the pickets were being called in, no lights were allowed, and the strictest silence was enjoined upon all. A careful count was made to see if the whole troop was present. They then moved off at a walk, Rogers leading, with Miller by his side. At the place which had been designated for the formation of the ambush, the troop was halted, and forty-four men were counted off, who were to accompany Captain Rogers, while the remainder were divided and posted in the wood, on either side of the road, by Miller and Franklin. To save the strength of their horses as much as possible, the men dismounted, and for the most part seated themselves upon the ground, waiting the appearance of daylight. Here, also, each man was individually made acquainted with the plan of the officers, thus rendering a mistake in its execution almost impossible.

It was broad daylight when Rogers moved his little command of forty-four men from the shelter of the timber, in full view of the rebel encampment. He was greeted by a fire from a picket guard, which was not returned, but he could see that the whole camp had been aroused, and active operations of some kind were going on within. He had left the timber more than a quarter of a mile nearer to the enemy than the place where the ambush was posted, and, as he moved leisurely over the open country and through the cultivated fields, continued to keep his men in a position where he could easily gain the timber without risking the probability of his small band being ridden down by over-

whelming numbers. At first, Captain Sykes hesitated to pursue, but as the force before him pretty nearly corresponded with the information he had received from Stevenson, and, as he placed no confidence in the subsequent reports he had received from citizens, whose inexperience or whose fears he believed had led them astray, he rejoiced in the opportunity of utterly destroying an enemy whom he feared as much as he hated. He had calculated much upon the assumed recklessness of his adversary, and the daring movement of attempting to pass through the open country with a handful of men, in full view of his own superior numbers, had, therefore, excited no surprise. Hastily he gave the order to "mount, and cut the rascals to pieces!"

With a wild yell, but disordered ranks, his men rushed from behind the cover of their works. The captain was a little staggered when he saw the troops he had expected to ride down without an effort, at first halt, and then file deliberately, and in perfect order, toward the shelter of the woods they had left. At the distance of a hundred yards they exchanged volleys, but with very different effect. The rebels were in motion, and their bullets flew wildly and harmlessly over the heads of their adversaries. The Federals were stationary, and some half a dozen empty saddles attested the accuracy of their fire. Captain Rogers now retreated more rapidly, pausing, however, occasionally to greet his pursuers with a storm of leaden messengers. As he neared the ambush he had planted, his pace quickened; his men seemed to be thrown into confusion; they no longer wheeled to fire upon their pursuers, but presented all the appearance of a hopeless and disorderly flight. Elated by what he now esteemed an assured victory, Captain Sykes shouted:

"Forward, boys! don't let one of them escape! Dead or alive, we must have them all!"

On came the pursuers, while the pursued, notwithstanding their apparent terror, made slower progress. Again Captain Sykes shouted:

"Use your spurs, men, and they are ours! We are gaining on them at every jump! It will be our fault if we don't bag every one!"

These were his last words on earth. He had approached to within less than fifty yards of the concealed ambush, and now a deadly fire was poured upon him, which made his ranks reel like a drunken man. At the same time the disorder of the fugitives he was pursuing disappeared as if by magic.

Wheeling promptly at the order of their commander, they came thundering to the charge. Another volley was poured in from either side of the road, and the astounded rebels broke and fled in all directions. For two hours they were pursued, and shot down without mercy. How many escaped was never known. The victors did not take the trouble to count the dead. The wounded, too, were left where they fell, Captain Rogers having no means of taking care of them, and being certain, moreover, that their secession friends in the neighborhood would hunt them up as soon as his back was turned. His own loss was one killed, and five wounded. In returning from the pursuit, John Franklin paused at the spot where Captain Sykes had fallen. Dismounting from his horse, he examined the wound which sent him to his long account.

"He got it just where I meant to hit him," he said aloud; though he was evidently not addressing the soldiers who had reined up about him. "I thought he couldn't escape a second time. 'Tis strange," he continued, "that though I don't now care a straw for the girl, and haven't for months, how keen I was to put a bullet in his carcass!

I don't think I could have died easy without knowing that he had gone before me."

Taking one more look at the dead body, he remounted his horse, and directed his steps to the late rebel encampment, where the various pursuing parties were assembled.

Perfectly satisfied that those who had escaped the pursuit and the battle would not stop in that vicinity, Thomas Rogers returned to his father's old neighborhood. He had enough to do there to keep him busy for some time, and it was, moreover, the best point for enlisting men to fill up his company to the full complement of one hundred. Riding up to the dwelling of Mr. Jones, he informed him that he had come to pay him a brief visit, and added that he trusted it would prove no inconvenience. It was in vain that Mr. Jones protested that he did not have provisions enough to supply his own family. Rogers was skeptical.

"Your nephew, then," he replied, "has not been as kind to you as to his other friends. It was his practice, I know, to leave with them more than he consumed; and I am tolerably certain, Mr. Jones, that if we were rebel soldiers instead of being what we are, you would find no difficulty in supplying us. At all events, I intend to camp at your spring, and you can take your choice, either to send us what we need, or allow me to send a squad of men to get it for us. Upon one point, however, I have no objection to relieving your mind. I do not mean to subsist upon you alone; to-morrow I shall send out parties to make an inspection of the barns and smoke-houses of the leading secessionists, and, as they have thus far been untouched, I do not doubt that I shall collect enough to subsist my men while I remain here without drawing upon you for more than you can conveniently spare."

Mr. Jones protested that he had nothing to spare—that even to supply Captain Rogers for one day would subject

him to very great inconvenience, and insisted that there was still enough time to send out and get what they needed before sundown.

"My men and horses," replied Rogers, "are both tired, and I shall send out no parties to-day. I know what your resources are, Mr. Jones, and I know also what stores you have collected at your plantation on Mud Creek. In an hour from this time, if my men are not amply supplied with provisions, I shall send them up to see what they can find. In the mean time I shall take the liberty of posting a sentry at the house, and another at the barn."

This threat was all-sufficient. In little more than half the time designated, the soldiers were gladdened by the sight of an abundance of forage and provisions, of which both man and horse were much in need.

The next day Captain Rogers left the encampment in charge of Lieutenant Miller, and, attended by a single soldier, rode to the house of Mrs. Whitlock. He was warmly welcomed by both mother and daughter, each of whom had a hundred questions to ask. As most of these had reference to himself or his adventures, they were briefly answered; but he dwelt with much satisfaction upon the high reputation Tobias Wilson had already acquired as a soldier among the hardy veterans of the "Army of the Tennessee," and he predicted for him a brilliant and honorable career. He also communicated the fact, which he had learned by a letter from Wilson, of the marriage of his father with Mrs. Wilson. In return he was told of many neighborhood occurrences, and lastly of Captain Sykes's visit to Ella at a time when she was fortunately absent. She had received a letter from him a few days afterward, in which he announced his purpose to call again, and broadly hinted that the happiness of his life depended upon the result of that interview. She told how she had trem-

bled upon the receipt of that letter, and of her terror and affright from day to day until something induced him unexpectedly to go off without seeing her.

"It was my coming, I suppose," said Rogers, "that induced him to leave, and probably kept him for days beforehand in close companionship with his men. But you need not trouble yourself about him now, Miss Ella—he has gone where he will never disturb you again."

"Where?" she asked eagerly: "where has he gone? I did not think he had spirit enough to return to the army."

"He has gone to another world," was the reply. "He was killed in battle three days ago, fighting well enough—killed by one of my lieutenants, who was a former lover of a girl whom Sykes had deceived and betrayed, even while professing that his whole heart was devoted to you. So at least I have heard."

"May God pardon him!" she murmured; "besides his treason, he had many sins to answer for."

"Yes," he replied, "and without a redeeming virtue that ever came under my observation. If Franklin had not killed him, I should have done it myself."

"I am glad you did not," she said. "It must be a dark thing to have human blood upon your hands."

There was a shadow on his brow, and his voice was low and sad, as he replied:

"There is a good deal upon mine, Ella, and some of it, when you hear the story, may shock you beyond forgiveness. And yet I came here to-day to tell it. Will you walk with me? I do not wish to be interrupted."

"Yes; but you may keep your bloody stories to yourself. I do not want to hear them."

"Nevertheless I must tell it, because upon that depends another story which my heart is bursting to reveal."

They walked in silence to the garden, and for some time wandered over it, side by side, without a word being spoken by either party. At length he said abruptly:

"You remember the murder of Mr. Johnson, Ella, do you not?"

"How could I forget that horrible affair, or the other horrors that followed it? It seems like a dreadful dream, but I cannot banish it!"

"Well, I must begin with that."

He then related how, in riding home with Tobias Wilson on the day after the murder of his grandfather, they had met Parson Williams on the mountain side, and how they had tracked him up, and what strong circumstances they had collected of his participation in the murder. He further informed her that after their return home they had repaired to the scene of the murder; and he described, in clear and explicit terms, all the damning evidences there exhibited of the guilt of Parson Williams, Joshua Wilkins, and Jim Biles. He went over the conversation which had taken place that night between himself and Tobias Wilson, and painted the scene which followed at the burial of Mr. Johnson, when Tobias was prevailed upon by Sophy to pledge himself not to avenge the murder of his grandfather. He also told her that Miller, in gratitude for the kindness he had shown him, had revealed to him a plot, of which Parson Williams was the head, and Wilkins and Biles were to be instruments, to murder and burn out the Union men in the county as soon as the United States troops should leave it.

"And then," he added sternly, "I made up my mind that, before they did leave, these three miscreants should no longer cumber the earth."

Ella Whitlock now began to have a perception of the truth. She trembled violently, and exclaimed:

"Oh, you did not kill them?"

"I surely did, and would have avowed it at the time but for the fear of giving pain to those I loved."

"Why then tell me now?" she said, bursting into tears. "I did not wish to hear it."

"Because I've something else to tell you, which it would be dishonorable to utter while you were in ignorance of this. I love you, Ella, as few men have ever loved—far too deeply either to deceive you or to conceal from you anything that might affect your future happiness. Even your love would be valueless to me, if won under false pretenses."

During this speech she had been crying bitterly. He stood beside her in silence, offering no consolation; for he knew not what to offer, and, besides, he judged rightly that this outburst would prove a relief. At length she looked up, and said:

"Say no more now, Mr. Rogers; I must have time to think. And remember," she continued, "that, apart from this dreadful tale, I have never thought of you as a lover. I esteemed and valued you as a friend; but, until this day, you have never given me the right to do more. Wait six months, and you shall have my answer."

"Be it so; I expected as much."

As they returned to the house, she looked up at him, and inquired:

"Shall I tell my mother?"

"Assuredly. Indeed, I do not care if the whole world should know it now, although it would have grieved me much if you had heard it from any one but myself."

CHAPTER XV.

Captain Rogers, having cleared the county of guerrillas, was busily engaged in enlisting men for his company, when a new swarm of bandits began to pour into the defenseless region of North Alabama. While the army of General Rosecrans was hemmed in Chattanooga, with the Confederate lines extending from a point on the Tennessee River above that city to the base of Lookout Mountain below, with the river strongly picketed to Bridgeport, so as to cut off all supplies by railroad or water, that officer was compelled to depend for a scanty support obtained by wagoning over a dreadful road from Bridgeport to Chattanooga, and a longer and almost equally difficult road down Sequachie valley to the same point. The troops were reduced to half rations, and even that much was very irregularly furnished. In this condition of things, General Rosecrans was superseded, and General Grant appointed to the command of the department, with General Thomas commanding at Chattanooga. From Nashville Grant telegraphed to Thomas to hold the place at all hazards. The situation will be best understood by quoting that gallant general's grim response: "I'll hold it until we starve!" It was not cannon-balls or bullets that he feared, but starvation. General Bragg was fully aware of the straits to which the Federals were reduced, and, hoping to compel a surrender or evacuation by one decisive blow, he sent Wheeler, with ten thousand cavalry, into Sequachie valley to cut off an immense supply train,

which was slowly making its way to the half-famished army of the Tennessee. Crossing the river above Chattanooga, and moving with great celerity, General Wheeler succeeded in capturing seven hundred wagons, which were only guarded by about one thousand men. The wagons, with their contents, were burned, and the mules and horses shot upon the ground. Some sutlers' wagons, which accompanied the train, were also destroyed, after being robbed of all that was valuable. From thence he proceeded to McMinnville, which he easily captured, destroyed the public stores and public property of every kind, and indiscriminately robbed the citizens of money, watches, jewelry, clothing, all that they could appropriate or take away. From thence he marched to Shelbyville, ten miles from the railroad between Nashville and Stevenson, and which was guarded by only two companies of Home Guards. This town was little more than a trading post, from which the citizens of the surrounding country obtained their supplies. There was little public property, and that little of no great value. All the stores and the goods they contained were the property of private individuals. There were no fortifications, and no troops to man them if there had been. The majority of the citizens were Union men, but they had not taken up arms, nor in any way forfeited their claim to the character of peaceful citizens. It had been a considerable town before the war, and was still of importance as furnishing supplies to the inhabitants of Southern Tennessee and Northern Alabama. It was well stocked with goods, and was therefore just the place for Wheeler. Galloping into the town and securing the main streets, his men dismounted, and then commenced a scene of indiscriminate plunder, which has no parallel in the history of the war. Every store was broken open—every dwelling entered and searched. Not a dollar was left in the possession of any

citizen upon which they could lay their hands; not an article of value was spared. Bales of domestic, rolls of cloth, bolts of calico, pieces of silk, ladies' shawls, shoes, every article of merchandise were thrown into the streets; and the robbers freely helped themselves to whatever they took a fancy to, or could pack away upon their saddles or under them.

While his men were engaged in this delightful occupation, General Wheeler received notice that about six thousand United States cavalry, under Generals Crook and Mitchell, were in rapid pursuit. Calling off all of his command whom it was possible to move, he retreated toward Pulaski, intending to recross the Tennessee River below the mouth of Elk. At Farmington he was overtaken by General Crook. Here a battle ensued, in which the rebels were badly beaten, but from some mistake in the execution of an order he was enabled to effect his escape with the shattered remnants of his army. General Crook pressed hotly in pursuit, but the enemy possessed an advantage which rendered all his efforts unavailing. Going in advance they pressed all the fresh horses on the route, leaving their own tired and broken-down animals behind. In this way he managed to reach the river and cross over the remnant of his command a few hours before General Crook arrived in sight. But his raid had cost him dear. He had left Chattanooga with ten thousand men and ten or twelve pieces of light artillery; he regained the southern bank of the river with about four thousand men and half of his artillery. Besides his losses in battle, at least a thousand of his men—who had gorged themselves with plunder at Shelbyville—immediately deserted, and went southward to secure their ill-gotten gains. At Farmington another large number, finding themselves cut off from the main body, scattered and fled southward. Along the

whole line of his retreat squads of two, and three, and four, and five would fall behind, and as soon as they were out of sight would strike off in the same direction.

In this way every county in North Alabama was filled with lawless desperadoes. No man's property was secure two miles from an inhabited town. Many of them, indeed, had taken up their abode in the towns and villages; but these were of the better sort, and their behavior was generally unexceptionable. Among those who preferred a residence in the country, both on account of safety and for the better facilities it afforded for stealing and transporting their plunder to a market, were to be found the sons of men who were worth from one to four or five hundred thousand dollars. They had enjoyed every facility for obtaining the best educations, and had moved in the highest circles of society; but the demoralizing influence of such associates as were to be found under the standard of a general (Major-General Joseph Wheeler) who owed his rapid promotion alone to the favor of his kinsman, (Adjutant-General Cooper,) and who was about as well fitted to discharge the responsible duties of his high office as a well-trained mastiff would have been,* was too much, both for whatever

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* Wheeler was but twenty-two years of age when he was first appointed colonel of an Alabama regiment of infantry, because he was, as the Secretary of War (L. P. Walker) himself said, "*a favorite of General Cooper, and there was then no other place to give him.*" He was therefore transferred from Florida, made a citizen of Alabama and colonel of Alabama troops by the fiat of the War Department. Without exhibiting any military capacity, or giving evidence even of that personal courage so common in this country, he was in a very short time promoted to brigadier and then to major-general, and assigned to the chief command of the cavalry of the rebel Army of Tennessee—a position made vacant by the merited death of Van Dorn, at the hands of an outraged husband, of whose generous hospitality he had taken a low, vile, mean, and

natural honesty they might have had, and the advantages of education and early association with which they had been blessed. From gentlemen they had been converted into thieves and murderers of the most inexcusable kind. Although they did not feel strong enough to attempt any outrages that would be likely to excite resistance in the towns, they did not hesitate to ride into them; and, when under the influence of whisky, they boasted of what they had done, and loudly proclaimed their intention to rob, burn, and otherwise lay waste the plantations of well-known citizens—a threat which was by no means an empty one, and whose execution generally exceeded in atrocity their avowed intentions.*

When Wheeler had placed the river between himself and his pursuers, he found himself in one of the richest valleys of the South, the inhabitants of which were for the most part secessionists, and, naturally enough, supposed

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despicable advantage, and whose sadly mistaken kindness he had repaid by dishonoring his wife. Wheeler signalized his promotion by an attempt to surprise and retake Fort Donelson, and was disgracefully repulsed by a handful of raw troops posted in some log-cabins, protected by no works of defense, and supported only by a single line of rifle-pits. The place, if taken, could not have been held by the rebels a week; and the effort to surprise it must have been induced by the hope of pillage—an object which General Wheeler's subsequent career affords reason to believe that he regards as the highest aim and purpose of war. After this, General Forrest, who had protested against, but was reluctantly forced to participate in the useless, and, in the end, disgraceful movement, refused to serve under him, saying boldly that it was "bad enough to be commanded by an inexperienced boy, but to be ordered about by a boy and a fool combined, is more than I can stand."

* The author was one of those threatened, and in a few weeks he was robbed of thirty-five mules, four horses, and every hog, sheep, and goat, with every hoof of cattle, besides corn, provisions, etc. to an unknown amount, from one plantation.

that they would be exempted from any unnecessary exactions. But they were not long in ascertaining that this was a wide mistake. Every man in that delectable body of misnamed soldiers was his own quartermaster and commissary; and during the time they remained, for the pretended purpose of recruiting their horses, that delightful region was converted into a melancholy waste. The corn, just then fully ripe and ready for housing, was pulled in the fields, and fed to their horses on the ground. In this way more was wasted than consumed. Hogs were shot down at will, and particular portions cut off and carried to the camp, the larger part being left to rot on the ground; cattle were destroyed in the same manner; horses were stolen under the convenient name of impressment; for miles and miles not a fence was left standing, the dry rails being more convenient for firewood, besides saving the labor of cutting down and splitting up trees.

"But this," said one of the sufferers, "is not of so much consequence now, because they have left neither hogs nor cattle in the country to injure what little remains in the field."*

From the Courtland valley they went eastward toward Rome, Georgia, leaving, however, about a regiment behind, ostensibly to guard the ferries on the river; but, whatever the *general's* purpose was, the *men* thus left behind had a different view of their duties. Instead of confining

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* It may be said that the Union army committed similar depredations. Let the assertion be granted. The Union army were in the country of their enemies, and had a right, according to the laws of war, to draw their subsistence from hostile inhabitants. From known friends they took nothing they did not pay for or give cash vouchers. Wheeler's troops were in their own country and among their own friends. Who ever heard of United States soldiers forcibly seizing or *pressing* the property of citizens in any loyal State?

themselves to guarding the crossings of the river, they took advantage of the opportunity afforded them to increase their own private gains. It was their habit for parties to cross over late in the afternoon, and "capture" a lot of horses, mules, or some other valuable thing, and recross early the next morning with whatever they had succeeded in obtaining. In this way they avoided the danger of having their proceedings interfered with by the small body of United States cavalry then stationed at Brownsborough, on the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. Immense amounts of property were thus transported into Dixie, the profits therefrom going of course into the pockets of the captors. On one occasion, a citizen, who had lost three fine mules, followed them to the rebel camp. He succeeded in identifying the robber, and went with him to the quarters of the colonel. That worthy being, in his own phraseology, "a *leetle* under the influence of liquor,"—in plain English, very drunk,—first demanded, in a tone that he meant to be both dignified and stern, whether the claimant was not a d—d old Union traitor; and being answered that he was born in South Carolina, and had lived for nearly forty years in Alabama, and was besides too old to take any active part in the war, he had supposed that if he remained quietly at home, paying to the Confederacy all the taxes, and submitting to all the exactions made upon him, honestly and without a murmur, no more would be required; and that he did not think the epithet of traitor ought, under the circumstances, to be applied to him.

"Oh, yes; you paid what you couldn't help! There is not much merit in that."

"I have fully obeyed the law, and am entitled to its protection."

"D—n the law! We make the law ourselves wherever we go; and there's nothing in *our law* making it the duty

of an officer to hunt up mules for fellows like you. If you was a good patriot, you'd never have said a word about 'em, because there'll be plenty of Yankees down this way before long, and if I was to send 'em back to you, them rascals would be sure to git 'em. We are fightin' for your liberties—and we've come all the way from Kentucky* to protect your property and your lives."

The outraged applicant heartily wished that he had stayed at home to protect his own property and defend the liberties of his own neighbors; but he dared not whisper such a wish in the drunken presence of the brute to whose sense of justice he had been foolish enough to make an appeal. Finding there was no hope of redress from the colonel, but being very unwilling to lose his mules, as he was a poor man, to whom such a loss was a serious grievance, he determined to apply to the quartermaster, or at least to the man who held the commission and nominally discharged the duties of that office. The quartermaster was more polite than his superior, and seemed to think that it was bad enough to take away a man's property without adding insult to the wrong; but it was clear that he had no idea of assisting the owner to regain what he had lost. Was Mr. ——, he inquired, certain that the animals were brought to this encampment? Yes, he had followed them to the ferry on yesterday, and had tracked them this morning to the camp; besides, here was one of the men who took them.

"Did you take them, sir?" he inquired of the man, with great apparent sternness.

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* Wheeler's cavalry was composed of men from almost all the Southwestern States, and one of the worst regiments among them was from Kentucky. These double traitors—traitors to their State and to their government—were for months stationed on the south bank of the Tennessee, and deeply did the citizens have cause to rue their presence.

"No, sir, and there ain't been no mules brought into this camp to-day, nuther."

This was true, for they had been hidden out on the side of the mountain, and one of his comrades was at that very moment standing guard over them. For the convenience of the quartermaster, it was understood that no animals were to be brought in during the daytime, but were hid out for a time and slipped in at night. At this denial of the soldier, which he seemed uncommonly willing to accept, the quartermaster said:

"What can I do, Mr. ——? You hear what he says. Of course, you cannot expect me to neglect important duties to hunt up your property. If you will find your mules and show them to me, I will not only give them up, but punish the men severely who took them; that is all you could reasonably expect of me."

That certainly was all that Mr. —— would have expected if he had believed one word that had been said to him; but he did not, and he turned away with a conviction that the actual robber was not the only guilty party to the transaction. He could tolerate the drunken impertinence of the colonel better than the smooth hypocrisy of his subordinate. When leaving the encampment, the soldier followed him a short distance beyond the lines, and then said abruptly:

"What did you value them mules at, Mr. ——?"

"They cost me one hundred and fifty dollars each before the war, and they are worth double that now when good work animals are so hard to get."

"Well," said the soldier, "I don't wish to be hard on you, and if you'll give me three hundred and fifty dollars I'll bring 'em back to you in the course of a week. You see there's three of us, and that'll make a hundred dollars a piece, and I must have fifty for the trouble of bringing

'em back. I'm sure you couldn't expect anything more reasonable than that."

It was, indeed, more reasonable than Mr. —— had expected, and, much as he disliked the idea of buying back his own property from the thieves who had taken it, he assented to the proposition, and agreed to pay the three hundred and fifty dollars whenever the mules were delivered to him. He was not simple enough to believe that this seeming generosity was without a motive, and he concluded that it was the purpose of the thief to get his three hundred and fifty dollars, and then steal the mules again at an early day thereafter; but he kept his suspicions to himself, inwardly resolving to guard effectually against such a contingency. After the bargain was concluded, the soldier walked on by the side of his horse for some distance, unreservedly telling of various similar transactions in which he had been engaged. Observing that he always spoke of dividing his profits by three, Mr. —— asked, with seeming unconcern:

"Who is your third partner? There was but one man with you when you took the mules."

"Captain Williams, the quartermaster; and, though he never takes nothin' himself, because it would go to the government then, yet he's worth both of us, for he hides everything when we couldn't do it; and when the colonel gits in one of his tantrums and sets up for honest, which he ain't no mor'n the rest of us, the captain makes a great search and reports to him that there ain't nothin' been taken, and that we all's been slandered."

"I thought as much!" was the inward ejaculation of Mr. ——; and, saying that "he didn't have more than time to get home by dark," he bade his communicative companion good-by, and rode away at an increased pace, having gained considerable insight into the rapid manner

in which fortunes were accumulated by Confederate quartermasters.

The country through which General Wheeler had to pass on his journey to Rome was poor and extremely mountainous. The inhabitants had nothing of which to be robbed, except live stock, which they could easily hide in the mountains away from their houses and far from any traveled road. They were, however, almost universally loyal to the government of the United States. Of this the marauders were well aware. The First Alabama Cavalry, now attached to Kilpatrick's command in Sherman's army, were enlisted among these mountains, or rather had left their homes in the mountains, and made their way to Huntsville and Decatur to volunteer in the United States army. They had met Wheeler more than once on the battle-field, and given him cause to remember them with terror as well as with hatred. It was among their friends, their fathers, mothers, sisters, and little brothers, that he now found himself, and, poor as they were, he contrived, in his hurried march, to leave them still poorer. Pursuing his way to Georgia, he rejoined General Bragg with less than one-third of the men with whom he had set out upon his expedition. Here we take leave of them for the present, or rather of that part of them who still preserved a show of organization; but Wheeler's cavalry were ubiquitous. There was not a neighborhood in several States which was unoccupied by United States soldiers, or, what they dreaded still more, regular Confederate troops, in which they were not to be found. These last were particularly shunned, because, if caught by them, they would certainly be sent to the army, where, if reported to General Bragg, they would stand a fair chance of being shot for desertion. But in every part of the country where no such danger was to be apprehended, they were to be found

roving about with no object but pillage; and when questioned as to the reasons for their absence from their proper place in the army, the answer invariably was, either that they had been sent off on special duty by general or colonel somebody, or that they were then on their way to the front. In this connection it will not be improper to record a conversation which occurred between one of these parties and an old lady near the line between Alabama and Tennessee. Riding up to her house about mid-day, they inquired if they could get some dinner, adding that they were willing to pay her well for it—a willingness which was attributable to the fact that a body of United States cavalry were in the neighborhood, and they were thus restrained from committing depredations which would induce the sufferer to make a report that would cause pursuit.

After a brief inspection of their persons from the door of her house, she inquired:

"Who are you, and where are you going?"

She was answered:

"We belong to General Wheeler's cavalry, and are on our way to the front."

"Well, now, I wish you'd just tell me where the *front* is? I see you coming from all directions, and going every which way, and every living soul says he's going to the front. I want to know where the front is?"

In the eastern part of Jackson County there was an infantry garrison at Stevenson, and another at Bridgeport. The advent of Captain Rogers with his mounted men had also become known, and the consequence was that these stragglers, or, more properly speaking, deserters, gave that section a pretty wide berth, and confined their operations principally to that part of Marshall County lying north of the Tennessee, Jackson, west of Paint Rock, the whole of Madison, Limestone, and part of Lauderdale.

In returning from his pursuit of Wheeler, Gen. Crook had divided his command: one division, led by himself, retracing the route over which they had advanced; the other, under General Mitchell, marching up the valley, nearer the river, through Athens and Huntsville, on the direct road to Stevenson.

Many prisoners were captured by General Mitchell, but they were in general the least offensive of the gang, being those who had quietly settled at their own homes, or had collected in the towns without any object but that of enjoying themselves and avoiding the hard service of an actual campaign in Northern Georgia—the worst desperadoes having hidden themselves in the mountains and swamps until such time as they could emerge from their coverts with safety; then a regular system of thieving was inaugurated everywhere in the counties named, and a reign of terror in Southeastern Madison and Northern Marshall. Men were murdered, houses burned down, and property wantonly destroyed. The inhabitants, though almost all in moderate circumstances, were, nevertheless, well supplied with the necessaries of life. They had been nearly unanimous against secession. At one precinct, in that part of Madison, which cast over three hundred votes, there was not a single secessionist. This afforded a pretext for outrages upon them, which was never neglected. To be or to have been a Union man, unless the offender had subsequently become a violent secessionist, was always a sufficient excuse for any wrong that a brutal, thieving, murdering soldiery saw proper to commit. One neighborhood was completely depopulated, and the surrounding ones suffered terribly. Occasional bodies of United States troops had been sent into that region to clear the country of the wretches who infested it, and afford protection to the loyal residents. But in the mountains and swamps

there were many hiding-places that were inaccessible to those who were not familiar with the locality; and above all, the nearness of the river, and their facilities for crossing it at all times, made their escape of easy accomplishment. The only way therefore to put an effectual stop to their depredations was to make a regular station somewhere on the north bank nearly opposite to Guntersville. To put a small force there would be to doom it to capture or destruction, for the rebels held the south bank in considerable force, with Guntersville as headquarters, and could at any time, within a few days, collect and cross over a sufficient number to overwhelm a detachment composed of less than two hundred and fifty men. There was no military reason for establishing a permanent post at that point, and General Grant, who was then making arrangements to drive the enemy from around Chattanooga, had no troops to spare for any but absolutely necessary purposes. The occasional visits of parties of United States cavalry therefore did harm instead of good, for every man who received them kindly, or was known to have given them any information, was instantly marked, and the departure of the troops was the signal for remorseless vengeance.

Toward the last of October all the United States troops were withdrawn from the valley of the Tennessee, preparatory to a contemplated attack upon the rebel lines about Chattanooga. The company of Captain Rogers were the only mounted men that remained on the north bank of the river. The country soon swarmed with guerrillas, and again the inhabitants were subjected to the infliction of outrages of every description. In the western part of the valley their object seemed to be mainly that of gain. They uttered many threats indeed of hanging, burning, and destroying, and all were satisfied that these were threats which it would require but little provocation to induce

them to carry into execution; but the inhabitants were unarmed, the young men had been dragged away by the conscription, none but the old and helpless were left behind, and as these made no opposition to acts they could not prevent, or even ameliorate by remonstrance, they were generally exempt from personal violence.

A different state of things prevailed in the southeast and among the mountains to the northeast. Here, worse passions had been excited; neighbor was arrayed against neighbor, and to the evils of open violence were added private assassinations and midnight burnings. No man knew whom to trust, and gloomy suspicions even of his friends settled upon every man's heart. Learning that small parties of self-constituted soldiers had come down from Tennessee, and were infesting the northern and northwestern part of the county not far from him, Captain Rogers determined to make an effort to capture or destroy them. He therefore divided his company, and moving with one-half nearly northward, he sent Lieutenant Miller to the northwest, with instructions when he had reached a given point to turn eastward and move as rapidly as the country would permit, to meet him. In this way he expected to hem in and cut off the vandals who bid fair to desolate the land. As he proceeded on his march, his heart sickened within him. Almost every hour revealed some evidence of the cruel and relentless presence of men whom the long indulgence of every bad passion had converted into fiends. Now he would pass a field with the fences destroyed, the corn trampled down and rotting on the ground. A little farther on a heap of ashes marked where a dwelling once stood; and the question forced itself upon him, what has become of the helpless wretches who were once sheltered here? No cattle, no hogs, no horses, and no domestic animals of any kind were to be seen. A

dull, dread silence brooded over all. The footprints of desolation were the only signs which indicated that a happy and contented people once gathered their daily bread from the little coves and valleys about it. As he penetrated deeper into the mountains, the work of ruin did not seem to have been so complete. At long intervals, inhabited cabins were to be found, but the white-headed urchins playing in the yards ran to the houses with terrified faces, and their mothers would peep from the doors to see what new danger threatened them. If he halted to make an inquiry, the answer came from trembling lips, as if they were uncertain whether they were not giving information which would cause them to be visited by the vengeance of the opposing party. Approaching a house near nightfall, where there appeared to have been much less comparative suffering, and there was a prospect of obtaining sufficient forage for his horses, he gave notice to the owner of his purpose to halt, at the same time assuring him that he would pay liberally for whatever his men might consume.

"I can't hinder you from stopping here, sir," was the reply, "or from taking what you want. But, for God's sake, go on a mile or two farther. If you stop here I am undone. The first time your enemies come here they will charge me with entertaining you, and destroy everything that is left. The old woman and the children will be turned out to starve."

"But, old man," was the reply, "you cannot help my staying here, as you say; and surely no one would take vengeance on you for that?"

"Oh yes, sir; my nearest neighbor was burned out of house and home for no other reason."

"Who did it?"

"I don't know," was the reply.

"But I mean, which party did it?"

"I don't know, sir,—indeed I don't," he again said, determined not to confess his knowledge of anything relating to the hostile parties.

"Well," said Rogers, who saw that his ignorance was assumed, "I'll tell you who I am, and what my business is here. I am Captain Thomas Rogers, commanding a company of Union soldiers, and my business here is to take prisoner, shoot, and render harmless in every possible way the villains who have worked such terrible mischief here."

"Oh, sir! we thank you; all of us thank you at heart. But you will go away again, and then we shall be at their mercy."

"I think not: I think I have made such arrangements as will insure the destruction of a good many of them, and strike such terror into the remainder, that they will be in no hurry to visit this neighborhood again."

"Well, sir, since it must be so, stay where you are; I have plenty of corn and fodder, for they have left me scarcely anything to feed; but I am afraid that your men will have to put up with a scanty allowance."

"They have plenty of meat in their haversacks, and some bread; if you can furnish me a little more, that will be sufficient."

There was an abundance of corn-meal upon the premises, so that difficulty was soon settled. When their horses were fed, and the usual nightly precautions taken, Rogers entered the old man's dwelling, whose family consisted of himself and his wife, with two orphan grandchildren. The little ones were nearly as wild as savages; and though they had been assured that these were soldiers from whom they had nothing to dread, they shrank together in a corner, and remained there mute and stirless during the whole of his visit.

The old people greeted him cordially enough, and he

seated himself by the log-fire which served the purpose of both heating and lighting the room. After some remarks upon indifferent subjects, Rogers asked:

"Can you tell me how far it is to Johnson's Gap? I know it is somewhere about here, but I do not know exactly where."

"It is not over a half a mile, sir. That's my name. The gap was called after me, because I was the first settler in these parts."

"Not more than half a mile!" repeated Rogers. "Then you must have had troublesome visitors frequently; for I am told that is the only passway from the west."

"The only one near here, sir; but there is another four or five miles south that they can get through, though it's pretty rough."

"They'll not go southward," said Rogers; "and, if they do, they'll get into hot water pretty soon. They cannot get away in that direction."

So saying, he bid the old couple "good-by," and, declining their invitation to sleep in the house, returned to his men. Large camp-fires, which the cool nights of October rendered particularly grateful, were still blazing brightly. Spreading his blanket on the ground before one of them, and taking his seat upon it, he sent for Franklin to hold a consultation as to the best course to be adopted on the morrow. His lieutenant strongly insisted upon moving forward to the gap by daylight, and placing the troop where it could not be seen, but where it would at the same time completely command the pass. In this way he argued that not a single marauder who was driven before Miller's force could escape.

"They must come out here," he said, "or go south. They cannot stay where they are, for Miller knows every hole and hiding-place in the mountains; and if they cross

the ridge anywhere below us we can easily overtake them, and cut them to pieces. We have only to stay here, and they will rush right into our hands. If we move forward, they may get around our flanks and escape."

Captain Rogers was not of that class of soldiers who delight in acting in opposition to the opinions of their subordinates. He knew the value of good advice, no matter from what quarter it emanated, and was very far from rejecting it because it came from an inferior. He saw at once the sound good sense of Franklin's suggestion, and resolved to adopt it,—taking, however, at the same time the precaution of sending four men to guard the lower (or southern) pass.

During that day his men remained patiently at the posts to which they had been moved. At night no camp-fires were lighted, and not a sound broke the stillness that reigned in the solitary pass. About midnight two men came riding through. They were conversing unconcernedly, wholly unconscious of danger. Almost before they were aware of it they were seized, their arms pinioned behind them, and then they were led quietly to where the main body were sleeping. Not a question was asked. Their legs were also secured, and they were left on the ground to ruminate upon the difference between the license of their present mode of life and the restraints of a Northern prison.

During that night no others made their appearance, but the next day the look-out reported the approach of a considerable body. It turned out that they were fifteen in number. They had been divided into smaller squads, but as they were driven before Miller, they met and united in one body. Seeing only seven or eight men in the gap they at first mistook them for friends, but being soon undeceived upon that point, they unslung their carbines and prepared

to force a passage. Allowing them to approach within short rifle range, Rogers poured in a deadly fire from each side of the mountain-pass where his men were concealed, which was also the appointed signal for the party in front to charge.

The frightened guerrillas, who still retained their saddles unhurt, wheeled their horses and fled in the direction from which they had come.

Anticipating something of this sort, Miller had extended his flanks to their utmost capacity. He was much nearer to them than the fugitives supposed. They had not gone far before they found themselves inclosed in a semicircle, from which there was no escape. Every man was either killed or captured. The prisoners, including those previously taken by Miller and the two captured by Rogers in the gap, amounted to eleven in all. These were carried to Stevenson, and from thence transported to Nashville, for such disposition as the Federal commander at that point might see fit to make of them.

While Miller proceeded to Stevenson with his prisoners and the main body of his troop, Thomas Rogers, with a few picked men, remained to pay a visit to his old friend Dr. Griffin.

They met as men meet in troubled times, when they know that an hour of parting must soon come, and cannot tell whether they shall ever meet again. But it was not to visit the kind-hearted doctor alone that Thomas Rogers allowed himself this brief respite from duty. He had in contemplation a meeting still dearer, and more anxiously looked for, but one which he thought it necessary to bring about by apparent accident, and for which he desired to give some plausible reason other than the one which really governed him. Whether he succeeded, and how he succeeded, and what was the result, we reserve for another chapter.

CHAPTER XVI.

Thomas Rogers remained for several days at Dr. Griffin's hospitable mansion. In the daytime his old friend was generally absent from home, attending to his professional duties. At such periods, Rogers would take long walks, always in the direction of Mrs. Whitlock's house. Sometimes he would seat himself where he had a full view of the premises, and remain for hours waiting to catch a glimpse of the form that had become to him a holy and a worshiped thing. And when disappointed, as he generally was, he would rise and go away with sad and mournful steps, as if some great calamity had suddenly come upon him. At length his patient watchfulness was rewarded. One morning he saw her come forth, mount a horse which was standing ready saddled at the gate, and ride away. He marked the road she had taken; hastily returned to Dr. Griffin's, saddled and mounted his own steed, and rode in the direction he had seen her take. "I shall not miss her," he muttered, "for I could follow her horse's tracks if they made no more impression upon the earth than the moccasin of an Indian. Instinct would lead me aright."

Then the idea occurred to him that she had gone to visit a neighbor, and would probably remain all day. "No matter," was his inward comment, "I can wait; I have waited longer than that for objects less dear and less worthy. I can surely wait now."

While thus ruminating, he had unconsciously touched his mettled courser's side, more than once, with the spur.

The animal had gradually increased his pace; and when consciousness fully returned, his master found himself borne along in greater haste than he cared for any one to observe. On arriving at the road, or rather pathway, that Ella had taken, he found no difficulty in following the tracks of her horse, they being the only ones apparently by which it had been trodden for a week. She must have ridden very slowly, for as he came in sight of a house, about two miles distant from her mother's, he saw a man leading her horse to the stable.

"She has just gone in," he thought; "and from their putting up her horse it is clear that she will remain during the greater part of the day; but she will not stay away from her mother at night, and I shall meet her as she returns homeward." Riding slowly back on the path he had come, he turned into the woods where there was a thick undergrowth of bushes, when he alighted and stretched himself upon the grass, to wait, with a patience he knew would meet its reward, for the intervening hours to roll away. Toward evening he again rode forward in the direction he expected to meet her, but observing no sign of her coming, he rode backward and forward along the little path until, at last, he was gratified by seeing her horse led out, and soon afterward she herself came forth, and, shaking hands with the members of the family, started on her homeward way. Making a circuit through the woods to allow her time to come up, he again entered the path but a few yards in advance of her. She turned crimson when she saw him, and he, long and eagerly as he had sought that meeting, and prepared for it as he was, trembled like an aspen. When the first salutations were over, he inquired, with assumed ignorance, where she had been riding. It is doubtful if he heard the answer; it is certain that he never could remember it afterward.

His next effort at conversation was:

"As I am going your way, Miss Ella, may I have the pleasure of escorting you home?"

"Surely," she replied. "Thanks to you, we need no protection here now; but Captain Rogers's company must be always agreeable to his friends."

He was both gratified and abashed by this speech; gratified at her speaking so frankly of him as a friend, but abashed and uneasy at her quick resumption of her usual unembarrassed air.

They rode on, side by side; the only conversation being such as was elicited by occasional questions from her. He felt keenly that he was losing the opportunity he had so eagerly sought; but, for the life of him, he could not break the spell that bound him. When they came within sight of her mother's house, he suddenly summoned courage, and, laying his hand upon her bridle, said:

"Ella, we must not part yet; I have anxiously sought this interview, though I did not care to tell Dr. Griffin or your mother; but I have no wish to conceal the fact from you. I am going upon a hard and dangerous service, and you know me well enough to be certain that I shall not lag behind when brave men are seeking honor at the cannon's mouth. In the battle which drives Gen. Bragg from the heights around Chattanooga, I will have to meet a different enemy from the robber bands whom I have so easily defeated here. Gen. Bragg's soldiers are thoroughly disciplined veterans. Their charge is the most terrible thing I ever witnessed. Victors or vanquished, their pathway is always strewn with corpses, and marked by rills of blood. These are the men I must meet now; and I need not tell you that those who do so, if they expect to come off victorious, must carry their lives in their hands. The chances are even, Ella, that we will never meet again; and there-

fore I wished to see you once more before I left your neighborhood, perhaps forever."

Ella Whitlock had been in tears during the latter part of this speech. At its conclusion, she raised her eyes to his, and said:

"I know you must go, and that you must discharge your duty when there. I would not hinder you if I could. But, surely, there is no occasion for incurring any unusual danger?"

"Indeed there is. Upon this battle depends the fate, not merely of Chattanooga, but of Georgia, Tennessee, and a large part of Alabama. In that mountainous country, cavalry or mounted men will be useless. We shall be dismounted, and sent, as light troops, to the front. We will be first in the advance and last in the retreat; and if we should be compelled to meet one of those charges in mass which won them the field at Chickamauga, and the first day's fight at Murfreesborough, they will walk over us as easily as the buffalo tramples the grass of the prairie beneath his feet. Neither I nor the most of my men can afford to be taken prisoners. We are fighting with halters about our necks, and our dead bodies are all that an enemy is likely to capture. So if you hear that the Union army is defeated, put me down as among the number of those who will never return."

"Spare me!" she said. "My thoughts will be dark enough without hearing more of your danger. Indeed, you have told me too much already."

"And will you think of me, sweet Ella, when that fearful struggle comes? It will not tax your memory long. The last of Sherman's veterans are passing up. The battle cannot now be delayed. Promise to think of me then, and danger will sit upon me as lightly as the dew-drop on the floweret's leaf."

"How can I help thinking of you? Can I forget that you periled your own liberty to save my youngest brother from conscription? Or how, when both of their manly forms were wrapped in bloody shrouds, you came to my mother, and did all that a son could do to pour balm into her wounded heart, and save us from the losses that threatened us? I must be changed, indeed, before I can forget such acts as these, or fail to think of him who performed them."

"But that is not the way, Ella, in which I wish you to think of me. I would have you think of the future, not of the past."

She hesitated, and then said seriously, but not angrily:

"I thought we had a contract not to speak of that for six months to come."

"True; and I was very wrong to forget it. Forgive me for trespassing upon forbidden ground. I had no right to expect, I did not expect, the reversal of a sentence to which I myself agreed. But my impetuous feelings carried me away, and I forgot our compact, as well as the more bitter reflection, that the law of man and the law of God alike require ample atonement for bloodshed."

"It is not that," she replied, hastily; "it is not that. I could have decided that before now——"

She stopped suddenly, as she saw the bright light that flashed in his eyes, afraid that she had said too much.

"Go on!" he said, in a pleading tone, as she raised her handkerchief to her face to hide the crimson flush that spread over it.

"No, Captain Rogers," was the reply. "I must not forget our contract, though you have done so twice. Let us go in. You will wish to tell my mother good-by, and

anything further you have to say to me can be said in her presence, I suppose, without embarrassment to you."

To this Captain Rogers made no objection. His manner was far less grave than it had been for many days, and he remained for some time conversing with Mrs. Whitlock, exhibiting none of that restraint that would have afflicted him an hour before. On his way back to Dr. Griffin's he indulged himself in many a joyous dream, such as, alas! are seldom realized in this world of ours. But upon one point he could not be mistaken. Ella Whitlock surely did not regard the blood he had shed before he became a soldier as an insuperable barrier to their union. The few words she had been surprised into uttering, left no doubt of this upon his mind.

"I shouldn't be surprised," he said to himself, "if I was mistaken about Sophy; and it might not have gone as hard with Toby as I thought, if he had done what I did for him. But no," he continued; "it would have been all up with *him*. There's a good deal of difference between Sophy and Ella; and, besides, she had Toby's mother, with her strait-laced notions of religion, to back her, while Ella's mother looks at things altogether differently. I know well enough her daughter told her all; and I am pretty certain I shall never hear of that stumbling-block again, unless I am foolish enough to allude to it myself, which I think I will be very clear of doing."

Other soliloquies broke from his lips as he rode toward Dr. Griffin's house, all showing that the brightness and beauty of hope were shining in upon his heart. Oh how prone we are to believe that every gilded fancy that passes through the brain will turn out to be a reality! How apt are we to forget that there is a stern and pitiless Deity, who follows us by day and reposes by our side at night, forever

watching what golden thread he can break, what joy he can poison, and what hope he can extinguish forever! In the buoyancy of youth, and the happiness of a love which he believed to be already half won, Thomas Rogers thought not of the shadow and the night, which so often settle where the sunshine once rested and the springing flowers sent forth their sweetest perfume. He was happy now, and acted wisely in not looking beyond the present, or allowing his imagination to conjure up the dread images that reason and reflection alike tell us will come soon enough of themselves to scatter mourning along a pathway of gladness.

His departure had been fixed for the following morning. Before his last interview with Ella, he would have gone away without uttering a word of his love to any human being; but now his heart was yearning for a confidant, and that night he related all that had passed—all his hopes, fears, doubts, and anxieties—to Dr. Griffin, and vainly tried to extract a promise from the doctor that he would keep him constantly advised of all that occurred in the family of Mrs. Whitlock.

"I do not ask you," he added, "to tell me anything that Ella says or does, unless she knows that you mean to repeat it. But any message from her, however simple, will be very sweet."

"I shall make no promises," said the doctor, rising and turning his back to the fire. "I do not mean, at my years, to turn love-messenger, to convey sweet nothings from a foolish girl to an equally foolish young man. I may write to you occasionally, but I shall not trouble myself about what she says; and, mark you, don't fill your letters to me with any nonsense about your love, for I doubt if I shall take the trouble to tell her that you are even in the land of the living."

Thomas Rogers knew better; and he rose from his seat with a smile, saying:

"Well, doctor, you always would have your own way. I must leave you to act as your own feelings prompt. I know that will be kindly."

"But I don't mean to let my feelings have anything to do with it. I like the girl, and, if the truth must be told, I like you too, although I can't call to mind anything about you that is particularly worth liking. But I do like you both, and, if I were to let my feelings control me, I should be doing fifty silly things that you want done, and are both afraid to say you want."

"Be it as you please, doctor. And now I must leave you to your repose. I will wake you early in the morning, for I must be on my way before daylight makes its appearance in the eastern sky."

"You must not go yet," replied the doctor. "I want to ask you many questions about Tobias Wilson. I have been too busy in the daytime, since you have been here, and too tired at night, to ask you half I wish to know."

Rogers again took his seat, and, when all the doctor's queries were answered, he rose to seek his couch, saying warmly as he did so:

"In one word, doctor, he is better, and braver, and more gifted than any of us. His proper place is in a higher walk than mine, and I am glad that he has found it out; for, although I miss him sorely, I would not have his genius fettered by such a career as suits me, and which I must follow until peace returns to bless our land, or this body makes a feast for wolves and vultures."

The next morning, long before the sun had made his appearance above the horizon, Thomas Rogers was on his way to rejoin his command, who only awaited his coming to take

up the line of march for one of those terrible scenes of carnage, in which our little ambition so often prompts us to seek *glory* at the risk of a *grave*. But it would be unjust to ascribe such motives to the great mass of the combatants. On the contrary, higher impulses and more noble aspirations led them on; and the heroism they manifested may almost be claimed as the offspring of religion.

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